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September 2010

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TALK OF debt has dominated the start of the European season. The vast majority of teams considered to be favourites to win either the Champions League or Europa League hold their status thanks to spending facilitated either by the banks or through the largesse and ambition of sugar daddies.

For all the attention focused on the debts of Barcelona, Liverpool and Manchester United, as well as the extravagant spending of Chelsea and Manchester City, the most indebted club of the past decade have been Internazionale, last season's European champions.

Inter owner Massimo Moratti has overseen spending of almost £1billion (1.15billion euros according to respected Italian sources). Most of that money has come from Moratti's own pockets; proof that money can eventually buy success.

After winning their first European Cup for more than 40 years, Inter now face the challenge of retaining the trophy – a feat not achieved since Milan more than two decades ago. The chances are high that there will be a different winner this year – possibly one from London, for the first time.

In our annual Euro Clubs guide (starting on page 46) we have included teams who, by the time you read this, will have already been knocked out of European competition. However, as ever, monthly deadlines forced our hand. But better to provide too much coverage than not enough.

Next month is a very exciting one for *World Soccer* as we will celebrate our 50th birthday. Please look out for a special anniversary edition.

GAVIN HAMILTON, Editor
gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Last month, columnist and US correspondent Paul Gardner was honoured by the US National Soccer Hall of Fame. He received the Colin Jose Media Award for his contribution to the game.

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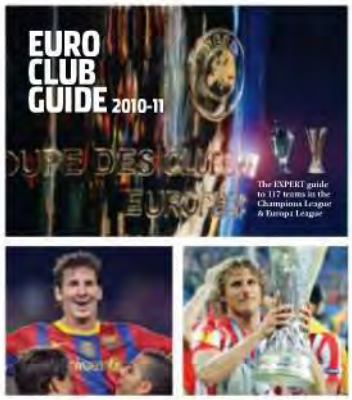

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The expert guide to the 2010-11 UEFA competitions

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...IN PICTURES

The global game caught on camera

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Flare players...Fenerbahce fans light up the Toumba Stadium in Thessaloniki during the Europa League play-off first leg against PAOK

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Diarra delight... Bordeaux's Alou Diarra (no4) celebrates his goal away to Paris Saint-Germain

Long stretch...Montpellier midfielder Marco Estrada controls the ball against Caen

Brazilian cheer...an Internacional fan prior to the second leg of the Libertadores Cup Final in Porto Alegre

Making a splash...Juventus midfielder Diego challenges for the ball amid torrential rain in the Europa League "home" tie against Shamrock Rovers, which was played in Modena

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Six appeal...newly promoted Newcastle United celebrate scoring six goals against Aston Villa

The eyes have it...Sampdoria's Antonio Cassano, deep in thought

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Brian Glanville

...on the end of Beckham's England career...Joe Cole's arrival at Anfield...outcasts at Man City...what to do about North Korea

Shoddy...Beckham derserved an explanation

IN THE WORDS of the great American comedian Jimmy Durante: "Everyone wants to get in on the act." Including our resplendent prime minister, David Cameron, who gratuitously intervened "to pay tribute to someone who has been an incredible role model".

That Fabio Capello clumsily and insensitively handled the whole matter of David Beckham not playing for England again can hardly be denied. That Beckham deserved an explanation, in terms of sheer courtesy, is plain enough. And yet, after Capello's bewildering years of what one has termed "Beckhamitis", it has – or so at least it seems – put a belated end to a long period of absurd indulgence.

It could surely and rationally be said that, for even as long as five years, Beckham has been living on borrowed time. His lack of pace and skill to beat an opposing full-back and get to the line have made him, whatever the splendours of his long-distance crosses and free-kicks, a burden rather than a blessing to a team from which he has excluded a cohort of faster, younger, better outside-rights.

Those truncated cameo appearances, each one excessively rewarded with another cheapened cap, have ludicrously bloated his appearance record. Just reflect on the fact that he now has half a dozen caps more than Bobby Moore, who won his 109 fair and square over 90 minute distances, with the glittering exception of the 1966 World Cup Final, when he captained England to success at Wembley, when the teams played 120 minutes, with extra time.

Steve McClaren, Capello's dismal predecessor, who has rehabilitated himself in Europe, did have the guts to drop Beckham when he initially took over the England team, though his courage failed him and he brought him back. It's too easily forgotten that in 1998, at the World Cup in France, Beckham disgraced himself and failed his team, condemning them to play most of a vital game a man short when he kicked out at the Argentina provocateur, Diego Simeone.

It took a long time for him to be forgiven and one remembers with horror the way, when he came off the field after losing an international game in the European finals of 2000, he was viciously abused by a bunch of young thugs who even vilified and threatened his wife and son. It is to his credit that he came back from all that and resuscitated his career.

He also had to contend with the hostility of his manager at Manchester United, Alex Ferguson, who, in that dressing-room episode, launched a football boot which caught Beckham, deliberately or otherwise, above the eye, and to which he impressively responded by wearing a prominent piece of plaster over the wound.

> "Capello has, so it would seem, put an end to a long period of absurd indulgence"

That right foot came splendidly to England's rescue when they were threatened with a humiliating World Cup qualifying defeat at home to Greece, after Teddy Sheringham had procured a phantom free-kick. But, by the same token, though he may have scored that vital World Cup penalty against Argentina in Japan, he subsequently jumped out of the way of a tackle against Brazil which led to their equalising goal on the way to England's 2-1 defeat at the quarter-final stage.

It would cost the hapless FA £12million to get rid of Capello but who, even if he did leave, could succeed him?

Martin O'Neill, who at one time seemed a serious candidate and has now, with one belated bound, set himself free from Aston Villa – whose owner, Randy Lerner, having poured £180m-plus into the club, could hardly be blamed for his reluctance to let O'Neill go on spending such vast sums as he did.

How about Steve Coppell, who in no time at all walked out on Bristol City, declaring, to one's disappointment, that he will now retire from football management. Since, in my view, he still has so much to offer, I can only hope that he will change his mind soon and that some other club will offer him a role he can accept. He worked wonders at Crystal Palace, who so nearly toppled Manchester United in the 1990 FA Cup Final at Wembley.

As a right-winger, Coppell was supremely versatile, fast, elusive and admirably ready to drop back to help his right-back, not least when playing for England in front of Phil Neal. How well one still remembers the prodigious throw-in from the right in Bilbao, which gave Bryan Robson's head a devastatingly early goal against France, in the 1982 World Cup.

One of the very few professional footballers with a university degree – in economics, from Liverpool University – he is a drily humorous,

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Seeing red...Cole

intelligent man and the English game can ill afford to lose him.

ALL the ballyhoo about Beckham seems strangely to have obscured what looks suspiciously and deplorably like the victimisation of Joe Cole. How ironic it was that, on the day of England's laborious victory over Hungary, when Cole didn't even figure in the English squad, Steven Gerrard, the English hero of the evening, should have paid such generous tribute to Cole, who, of course, has just left Chelsea for Liverpool.

Gerrard has even gone so far, perhaps somewhat too far, as to compare Cole with Argentina's Lionel Messi, marvelling at Joe's virtuosity, juggling not a football but a golf ball.

Could Cole's lamentable exclusion have something to do with the fact that he was critical of what he called England's "long ball tactics" in South Africa? Why were the media so quiet on this subject, while so exhaustive on the subject of Beckham's demise?

Cole, however, did himself no favours in recklessly getting himself sent off against Arsenal on his league debut for Liverpool.

MANCHESTER "Spend, Spend, Spend" City, who with Chelsea, have so radically distorted the "Greed Is Good" League, seem overwhelmed by an embarrassment of riches; not least in the case of Craig Bellamy and perhaps, in that of Carlos Tevez.

The Italian manager Roberto Mancini has long seemed at daggers drawn with Bellamy, who has joined Championship side Cardiff City on loan, and is hardly on amicable terms with Argentina's Carlos Tevez. Bellamy, it is true, is no shrinking violent, yet beyond all doubt he is one of the most talented British footballers: fast, skilled and penetrative. He hasn't concealed, from the outset, his disagreement with Mancini's training methods, yet this didn't prevent him having an excellent season, scoring and making goals.

Tevez, who had an impressive World Cup for his country, has seemed restless. And what will now happen with Robinho? Back from his loan period with Santos, and after a satisfactory performance for Brazil in the recent World Cup, he was promptly named by Mancini in his Europa League squad.

Clearly there is interest in so talented if erratic a player elsewhere, but one cannot imagine any club in the world coughing up remotely as much as those somewhat rashly spent £32m. Is there an oligarch in the house? Or another sheikh?

GOOD to see that, as one had hoped, Sepp Blatter and FIFA have zeroed in on the abominable North Korean government after its typically barbaric treatment of its World Cup team.

Six hours of public abuse by some 400 stooges on their embarrassed return to Pyongyang, the usual extorted, grovelling apologies from the victims, and poor Kim Jong-hun, the coach, was not merely stripped of his job, but condemned to work unpaid on a building site.

Meanwhile, the majority of the poor populace is condemned to starve. FIFA, whose rules plainly and properly reject any governmental interference with national football federations, have already brought the Nigerian government into line after its attempt at draconian sanctions on the unsuccessful World Cup team.

Unfortunately, the North Korea regime is a sinister law unto itself and the threat of expulsion from FIFA won't especially concern them. ●

Sacked...coach Kim

GOALS
WE'D LIKE TO SEE AGAIN...

Volley...Quaresma

1 Ricardo Quaresma, Besiktas v HJK Helsinki
Holds off two men, plays a one-two, then tees up and volleys home

2 Sebastien Pocognoli, Standard v Lierse
Dribble before a chip over the keeper

3 Stephane Sessegnon, PSG v Saint-Etienne
Acrobatic volley into the top corner

4 Wesley Sneijder, Internazionale v Juventus
Curls in a right-foot shot from 20 yards out

5 Laionel, Academica v Benfica
A superb curling shot into the top corner

6 Marco Fabian, Guadalajara v Internacional
Perfectly executed scissor kick to level the scores in the Libertadores Cup Final on aggregate

Equaliser...Fabian

AND ONE TO FORGET...

Horror show...Lecjaks (no7) scores an own goal in the Champions League

Anderlecht defender **Jan Lecjaks** *meets a Partizan Belgrade cross and strikes left-footed into his own net*

To see clips of these goals, visit www.worldsoccer.com

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NUMBERS GAME

100
goals scored by Landon Donovan in Major League Soccer. He becomes only the sixth player to reach treble figures

92
seconds it took Koln defender Youssef Mohamad to get sent off against Kaiserslautern – the fastest red card in Bundesliga history

51,200
season tickets sold by Borussia Dortmund to set a new club record

3
London clubs – Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur – in the group stage of the Champions League, which is a record for one city

14
times the Libertadores Cup has been won by a Brazilian club

1,076
minutes Wayne Rooney had played for Manchester United and England without scoring, up to and including United's opening game of the season

18
international games Nicolas Anelka was banned for by the French FA for his behaviour at the World Cup

0
times Alex Ferguson had seen Bebe play before Manchester United paid £7.4million for the 20-year-old

REPORTS we couldn't make up

Nicked...Ccahuantico (left) has possession stolen from him by River's Oscar Ahumada

CIENCIANO: WE WERE ROBBED, LITERALLY

Cesar Ccahuantico, a 30-year-old midfielder with Peruvian top-flight club Cienciano, has been sentenced to seven years in prison for helping to steal money from the club two years ago.

Four masked men stole $84,500 meant for the players' wages from the club's premises in March 2008. Police found later that one of the thieves had called Ccahuantico eight times on his mobile phone before and after the robbery.

Ccahuantico played in the Cienciano side that beat River Plate in the Final of the 2003 Copa Sudamericana and won Peru's first international trophy.

KARIMI'S FAST GETAWAY

Iran international Ali Karimi was sacked by his club, Steel Azin, for not fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. The club said the 31-year-old, who is the country's second-most capped player and the third-highest scorer, was dismissed "for being disobedient and not fasting during Ramadan".

Real worth...Tebar (right) and Ronaldo

MADRID BARGAIN

One year after signing Cristiano Ronaldo from Manchester United for £80million, Real Madrid demonstrated that they are also capable of dealing at the opposite end of the market, selling their midfielder Marcos Tebar to second division Girona...for the princely sum of €100.

RUMOURS we'd like to believe

Talks...Adebayor

France Football believes that a Marseille move for Manchester City's Emmanuel Adebayor is in the air. The Togo striker worked under the current OM boss Didier Deschamps at Monaco and apparently the pair have spoken on the phone.

Sources in Holland claim that it is only a matter of time before Ajax's promising right-back Gregory Van der Wiel joins Chelsea. If the Amsterdam club do not survive the winter in the Champions League, the Holland international could move as soon as January.

Lille's Ivory Coast attacker Gervinho wants to leave and the word is that the northern French club will let him go for a £20million fee. Liverpool and several Spanish clubs are thought to be in the auction room.

Gazzetta dello Sport reporters who met Bayern Munich coach Louis Van Gaal at a summer training camp say he wants Wolfsburg striker Edin Dzeko.

London calling...Van der Wiel

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Paul Gardner

2010's legacy: vuvuzelas and bore draws

I BRING YOU tidings of great joy and delight on the World Cup scene – tidings that should, I think, make the United States a shoo-in with its bid to host the 2018 or the 2022 World Cup, or both of them, come to that.

The tidings were to be seen in New Jersey at the New Meadowlands stadium on the occasion of a USA-Brazil friendly. All round the stadium, at every entrance gate, fans were met with clearly designed notices that said "NO VUVUZELAS".

So we got an 80,000-plus crowd that sounded like a football crowd, with cheers and songs and roars and boos and silences – human sounding noises that rose and fell as they mirrored the game's action – instead of that prolonged monotonous drone that was inflicted on us throughout the South African World Cup.

The sooner FIFA impose a worldwide ban on these stupid horns the better, but FIFA only imposes bans on things like goal-line technology or players wearing jewellery, so we're left with the thought that we're supposed to regard vuvuzelas as a "legacy" from 2010.

Talk of legacies brings us to another stadium story, one of the least surprising stories of 2010: the revelation that many of the World Cup stadiums built in South Africa may be heading directly for the white elephants graveyard.

Too small for cricket, not designed with rugby in mind (particularly that sport's need for luxury suites), or built in the wrong place and too big for local use, the stadiums stand as a reminder of the £850million invested in them – in a country where about a quarter of the population is unemployed.

But the World Cup moves on, leaving the South Africans to work that one out. Now Sepp Blatter has discovered another legacy from 2010, one that he is not happy with: dull games.

Having, at last, turned his attention to the quality of the football played, Blatter has decided that in first-round games teams "above all do not want to lose – that makes for a boring game". So Blatter proposes to banish first-round ties by using the penalty shoot-out or re-introducing the golden goal.

"An all-out struggle between two equal teams that ends in stalemate is surely acceptable"

Dull...France (in white) and Uruguay drew 0-0 in their opening game in South Africa this summer

Let's first understand the problem. It is not tied scorelines. Draws have been a feature of football (not to mention betting coupons) for over 140 years. An all-out struggle between two equal teams that ends in stalemate is surely acceptable. The problem arises with teams that deliberately play for a draw. Those "engineered" draws are the boring ones that Blatter is, quite rightly, complaining about.

Any attempt to get rid of them must look beyond the scoreline to find a way of deterring defensive play. If teams can be encouraged to play adventurous, attacking football, we may still get draws, but they are much less likely to be boring.

But it will amaze no one to know that Blatter, having got hold of a genuine football problem, now offers two remedies that are bound to make matters worse. Both the penalty shoot-out and the golden goal will inevitably make coaches and teams more, not less, defensive.

The golden goal is a good example of the confusion sewn by marketing jargon. The original term was "sudden death overtime". FIFA didn't like that, too negative or morbid, so the sunny "golden goal" replaced it. But the coaches and the players knew that sudden death was in the air – one error could be fatal. So why not play for an extra-time draw and opt for the less cruel decider of the shoot-out?

The extra-time golden goal also carries a hidden problem for the referees in that awarding a penalty during that period would almost certainly mean the goal. During the two World Cups that the golden goal operated – 1998 and 2002 – there were nine games that needed extra time and none featured a regular penalty.

The problem with the shoot-out is that teams can use defensive tactics and "play for the shoot out". So is there a solution to the problem of boring, engineered ties? I believe there is – and one that does not involve any change in the rules of the game, one that could be introduced tomorrow. Watch this space... ●

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Jim Holden

Youngsters squeezed out by English caution

THE IMMEDIATE focus for English football in the wake of a crushingly inept World Cup campaign was the future of team manager Fabio Capello, whose decision to stay at the helm on a salary of £6million a year proved that money is a great deal more important than dignity in the modern game. It is an absurd sum to continue paying for a man who failed so miserably.

That said, it remains the truth that the problems of the England national team are more deep-rooted than the flawed leadership of the moment provided by Capello. The catalogue is long – and it includes sloppy passing, poor technique, fatigue from an over-long domestic season, overblown player egos, insular arrogance and tactical naivety. Above all, the future is clouded by the lack of opportunity for young English players to flourish in the Premier League.

A conventional view is that this has occurred because the talent level of young English footballers simply isn't good enough, that coaching is generally poor, that technique is sloppy, that a long-ball culture still rules the roost in junior leagues.

I'm not so sure. The performances of England's junior teams in recent seasons have been excellent. The Under-17s are current European champions and considered the best generation ever for technique and skill. The Under-21s reached the Final of the European Championship, while the Under-19s made it to the semi-finals of their European tournament this summer, drawing 1-1 with eventual winners France along the way.

That does not appear to signify a lack of raw talent. The significant problem now, and one identified by former England midfielder Trevor Brooking, is that these English youngsters are not given a chance to play in senior first-team football early enough and so their careers are stifled.

Brooking, who is the FA head of development, points to a contrast between two equally talented young strikers: Thomas Muller of Germany and Daniel Sturridge of England.

Muller was thrown into the Bayern Munich first team last August at the age of 19 by coach Louis Van Gaal because he saw potential to work with. Within a year Muller had won the World Cup golden boot. Also last August, Sturridge joined Chelsea at the age of 19, but he made only 12 league appearances, most as a brief substitute. He did not get the chance to prove himself where it matters: out on the field.

I went to watch England Under-19s in the European tournament – like new France manager Laurent Blanc, but unlike Capello – and so did Brooking. We marvelled at the potential of Spain's Sergio Canales and the promise of France playmaker Enzo Reale. We saw Barcelona take the event seriously by providing seven youngsters for the Spain team – a contrast to Premier League clubs who had to be persuaded of the merits of the tournament.

What hurts Brooking most is that he knows the young Spaniards will soon get first-team action and the English kids will not – with bitter consequences.

Potential...England's John Bostock at this summer Euro Under-19 finals

"What we need in England is for the youngsters at tournaments like this Under-19 championship to be playing Premier League football as soon as possible," says Brooking. "Unless that happens they won't develop. The key age for me is 18 to 20. It is a 24-month window during which they must be stretched as footballers. If not, the danger is you lose them forever at the highest level. They just go backwards.

"At the moment the majority do go backwards. I look at players from the last three years of under-19 England groups and I can already see players being lost and drifting out of the game. Some managers at club level will tell you the players are not ready. But actually a lot of them are, it's just that we never find out about them."

They are powerful words from Brooking and they ring true.

> **"The key age for me is 18 to 24. It is a 24-month window during which they must be stretched as footballers. If not... they just go backwards"**

Contrast...Brooking

Ashley Cole, now considered the finest left-back in the world, came close to remaining an anonymous journeyman. Arsene Wenger harboured serious doubts when Cole was a kid at Arsenal and sent him on loan to Crystal Palace. It was only when regular full-back Sylvinho was injured that Cole had to be pressed into first-team action as a 19-year-old, yet he flourished so quickly that he could not be dropped.

I wonder, how many players English football has lost through self-defeating caution?

And how many will it continue to lose in the next few years unless attitudes change among Premier League clubs and their managers? ●

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HEROES...

Committed...Zanetti

JAVIER ZANETTI
The Internazionale defender signed a three-year contract extension that will keep him with the Italian champions until he is 40.

FIORENTINA
The Italian club turned down commercial sponsors to put a charity, Save the Children, on their shirts.

JOHAN VOSKAMP
Scored eight goals for Sparta Rotterdam as they beat Almere City 12-1 in the Dutch second division.

Eight...Voskamp

& VILLAINS

Kicking off...Al Ahly get upset

AL AHLY
Several of the club's players attacked a policeman and officials of opponents JS Kabylie after they had a goal disallowed against their Algerian opponents in the African Champions League.

KENNY HUANG
The Chinese businessman was behind an ambitious attempt to buy Liverpool and proved himself to have a big mouth but no hard cash.

SOUTHAMPTON
The English third-tier club sparked an angry backlash when they tried to ban photographers from taking pictures at their games by insisting the media could only publish pictures taken by the club's official photographer.

Quick on the draw...how one newspaper got around Southampton's ban

BLATTERWATCH

Keeping tabs on the FIFA president

LAST month Blatter sprang a surprise by telling weekly German magazine *Focus* that he would like to see draws scrapped in the group stages of the World Cup.

"If there is no winner at the end of 90 minutes of play, we would proceed directly to penalty kicks," he said. "We are considering doing away with draws in the first round... and also ending extra-time play."

Earlier in the month the FIFA president continued his shift on goal-line technology when, on a visit to Singapore, he said: "If we have an accurate and simple system then we will implement it."

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12 STORIES YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

ENGLAND

FIFA team are in town

England's 2018 and 2022 World Cup bid came under scrutiny when the FIFA inspection team arrived in London. More, page 20

USA

Marquez joins New York

Major League Soccer secured one of its biggest names with the transfer of Mexico defender Rafael Marquez from Barcelona to New York. More, page 118

USA

A new Brazil

Brazil beat the United States 2-0 in a friendly in New York. More, page 32

ENGLAND

City spree tops £125million

Manchester City took their summer spending to record levels with the signing of Mario Balotelli and James Milner. More, page 116

BRAZIL

Inter win the Libertadores

Internacional of Porto Alegre won the Libertadores Cup Final on aggregate against Guadalajara of Mexico. More, page 113

ARGENTINA

All change

The new season kicked off with plenty of transfer activity. More, page 38

SPAIN

The silent scandal

Another scandal involving second-tier clubs has been uncovered – but nobody seems interested. More, page 24

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GERMANY
Row over Robben

Bayern Munich and the Dutch FA have fallen out over an injury to winger Arjen Robben. More, page 34

RUSSIA
Cash kings of St Petersburg

Zenit are spending their way back to the top of the Russian League. More, page 28

SWITZERLAND
Blatter calls time on draw

The FIFA president suggested penalty shoot-outs and golden goals as ways to stop World Cup group games ending in draws. More, page 11

FRANCE
Gourcuff joins Lyon

Les Bleus midfielder Yoann Gourcuff left Bordeaux for Lyon in a record deal. More, page 42

SPAIN
Madrid sign Ozil

Real Madrid bought one of the stars of the World Cup with the signing of Germany midfielder Mesut Ozil from Werder Bremen, More, page 16

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HEADLINERS

People in the news...on and off the pitch

Mesut Ozil

Real Madrid sign World Cup star...

SPAIN

ON SUNDAY it was Manchester United; Monday, Barcelona; Tuesday, it was Manchester City; Wednesday, Real Madrid; Thursday, Chelsea; Friday, Barcelona again. Welcome to just another week in the life of Mesut Ozil, the hottest transfer-market property to emerge from the 2010 World Cup. Eventually, Real Madrid's £12.5million bid for the 21-year-old was accepted by Werder Bremen, with the Spanish club's coach Jose Mourinho saying: "He's a player who can play for Real Madrid for 10 years."

Werder Bremen's director of sport, Klaus Allofs, had mixed feelings about the deal. On the one hand he knew it was inevitable that he was going to lose his best player; on the other hand, the auctioneering clutter guaranteed him the best possible price for Ozil.

"We are respecting the player's wishes to take the next step in his career," said Allofs after Bremen accepted the offer.

As for Ozil, this was the second time he had taken advantage of a soon-to-expire contract to force a step up. In January 2008, guided by his father's advice, he had turned down a contract extension with his original club Schalke and been snapped up by Bremen.

Even then, Allofs knew that, if Ozil confirmed his potential, Bremen would only have the youngster on borrowed time.

Ozil comes from one of German football's traditional football factory regions. Gelsenkirchen in the Ruhr is a town that counts its famous footballing sons all the way back to the legendary Ernst Kuzorra and Fritz Szepan in the 1930s. Ozil's Turkish roots also demonstrate a gradual cultural and social integration that no longer means talented emigre youngsters go back to Istanbul to make their way up the football ladder.

Ozil has always been a winner, starting in the 2006 German Youth Cup when he scored 10 goals on Schalke's path to a 2-1 victory over Bayern Munich in the Final. Within months he had made his first-team debut against Bayer Leverkusen and Bayern in the League Cup, followed by a league bow against Eintracht Frankfurt.

A further 29 games and he was on his way to Bremen, for whom he ran up 13 goals in 71 appearances – including the decisive winning strike against Leverkusen in the 2009 German Cup Final. One week earlier he had marked his 100th Bundesliga outing by scoring Bremen's opening goal in a 2-0 victory over his original club Schalke.

Already Ozil – following the example of, among others, Poland-born Miroslav Klose – had worked out he was good enough to play for Germany, and in August 2008 he rejected selection for Turkey. With his dual-nationality option, he was rewarded with a Germany debut the following February against Norway.

Germany Under-21 coach Horst Hrubesch took Ozil to the 2009 European finals and the midfielder rose to the occasion with one goal, two assists and a man-of-the-match award after the 4-0 thrashing of England in the Final. Team-mates that day who would help beat England in the 2010 World Cup included Manuel Neuer, Jerome Boateng and Sami Khedira, while James Milner would be England's only "South African".

The injury crisis which engulfed Germany in the run-up to South Africa guaranteed Ozil his playmaker's status and he scored the first-round winner against Ghana, commanded midfield against England and was one of the nominees for player of the tournament.

No wonder Ozil flew home from Johannesburg to find a long queue of rich clubs at his front door.

Keir Radnedge

Real deal...Madrid's bid of £12.5million finally saw Ozil head to Spain

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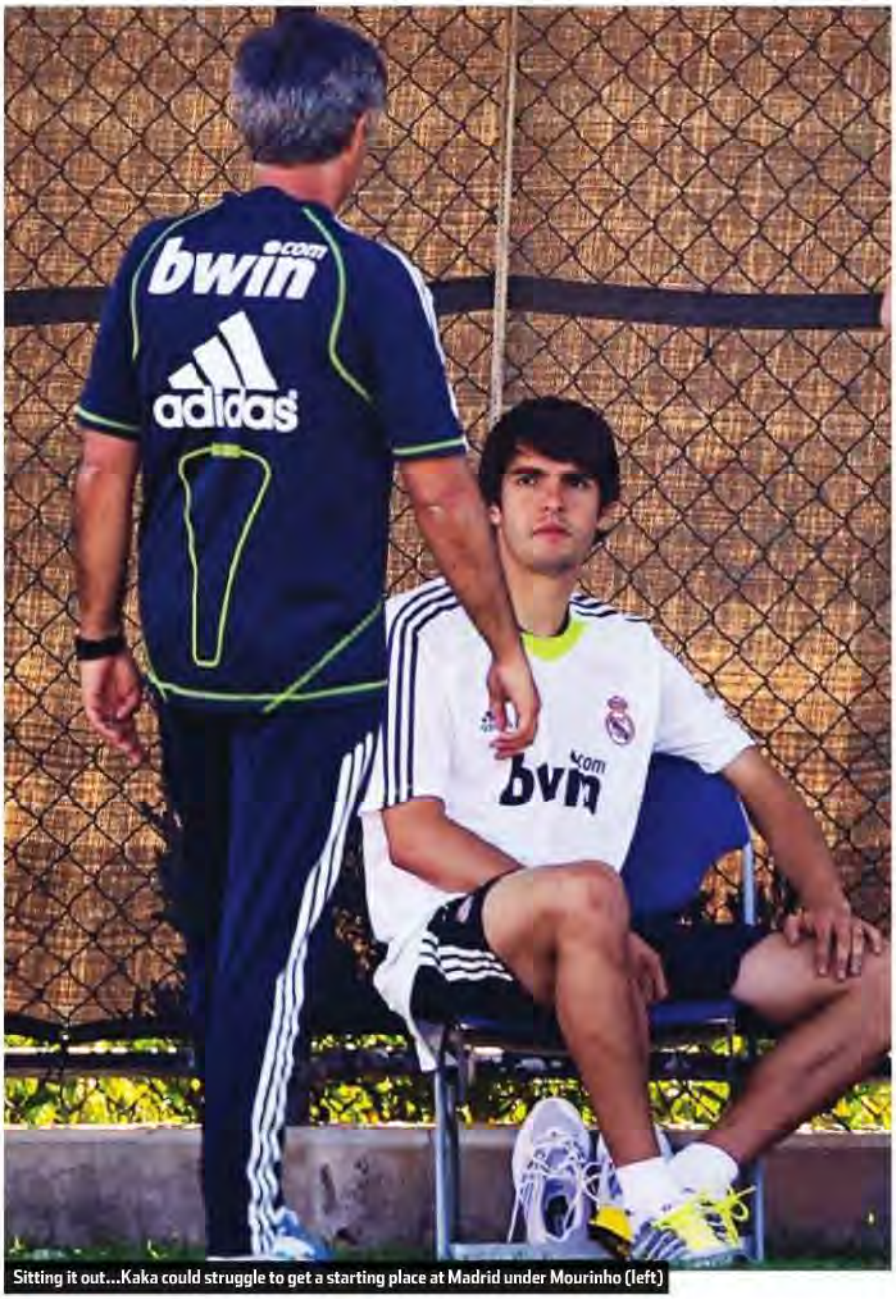

Sitting it out...Kaka could struggle to get a starting place at Madrid under Mourinho (left)

Kaka
...Brazilian's future at the Bernabeu in doubt

SPAIN

THESE ARE DIFFICULT days for Kaka. A year ago he was the standard bearer of a new era for Real Madrid, the second most expensive footballer of all time.

Now some critics are daring to suggest that his time is up at the Santiago Bernabeu and few are riding to his rescue. Even the pro-Madrid praetorian guard has largely abandoned him and rumours suggest that Madrid's board is running out of patience. Kaka has promised to come back better than ever and silence the doubters by returning to the summit, but it may not be easy.

His first season in Spain was largely disappointing. Despite some glimpses of his talent – away at Espanyol stands out, as does a wonderfully taken goal against Atletico Madrid – the former world player of the year, signed from Milan for £56million, failed to live up to expectations and by the end of the season he was injured. Well, griped the cynics, he said he was injured. The accusation was that, far from committed to Real Madrid, he was saving himself for the World Cup.

That feeling was reinforced at the start of summer training after the World Cup when Real Madrid flew to Los Angeles, only for Kaka to immediately fly back again, heading to Belgium for an operation on a torn meniscus ligament in his left knee which would keep him out for at least three months.

Kaka had carried the injury for much of last season and not said anything. He said he had not been aware of the seriousness of the pain and irritations he felt, but the media did not see it that way and he was accused of hiding his problems from Madrid. If that was not bad enough, the doctor that operated on him said he had risked his career by playing at the World Cup. Critics sniped that he had not risked the World Cup by playing for Madrid, and the fact that Madrid pay his wages was lost on no one.

In the sports daily *AS*, an unashamedly pro-Madrid newspaper, they angrily demanded that Kaka apologise to the fans as he had let them down. Jose Mourinho later insisted that if he could he would give his own knee to Kaka and happily hobble to the bench instead. But if that sounded like a coach in full support of a player, there were soon indications to the contrary when Mourinho said: "I can't cry over Kaka. I have fit players to think about."

One of those was Sergio Canales, the 19-year-old who joined Real Madrid from Racing Santander. At first no one seriously expected him to play a part this season, but Mourinho specifically asked the club not to send him out on loan and Canales played superbly in pre-season. Mourinho, who had insisted during his presentation that as well as winning he wanted the satisfaction of "bringing a young player through", raved about him. Having been presented as the man to resuscitate Kaka's career, Mourinho is now beginning to look like the man to launch Canales'.

So, suddenly, it seems that even when Kaka is finally fit again, in November or December, he will not walk straight back into the side. Mourinho will play a 4-2-3-1 and Kaka's natural role would be in the middle of the three behind the striker, Gonzalo Higuain, with Cristiano Ronaldo to one side and either Pedro Leon or Angel Di Maria to the other. Re-establishing himself in his predominant position looks increasingly unlikely for Kaka, particularly after Madrid finally made a glamour signing and bought Mesut Ozil. Not only did that mean the end for Rafael Van der Vaart, it appears to make Kaka's future more clouded than ever.

As fans got excited by one of the revelations of the World Cup – the summer star and the man that would make Madrid play – few recalled the man who had been brought in to fulfil that same role 12 months ago. Fewer still seemed to miss him. When Ozil was asked what his favourite position was, he did not hesitate. "I am a no10," he said. "I like to play behind the striker." Exactly where Kaka liked to play. If the Brazilian is to do so again, he must return better than ever. He has bridges to cross. And bridges to rebuild too.

Sid Lowe

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Super sub...many of Giuliano's goals in the Libertadores Cup came after his introduction from the bench

Giuliano
Internacional's young Libertadores hero

BRAZIL

THERE ARE TWO unusual facts about Internacional's top scorer in this season's Libertadores Cup-winning campaign: firstly, he is not a striker, and, secondly, he spent most of the knockout rounds sat on the bench.

Even so, six-goal Giuliano has a claim to be the Brazilian club's key player as they won their second title, and the 20-year-old midfielder is therefore entitled to dream of a glittering career.

He has made huge strides in the last year. After showing promise in the South American Under-20 Championship, Inter plucked him from Parana and he played a starring role when captaining Brazil as they came second in the World Youth Cup.

But it was not until this year that he came of age as a senior player.

A well-taken rebound helped Inter avoid defeat against Deportivo Quito. Then, in the return match, a magnificent left-foot shot made sure of his side's qualification for the knockout phase.

Two minutes from time in the quarter-final he saved his side and eliminated holders Estudiantes with a well-timed run and cool finish – perhaps the single most dramatic moment in this year's competition. Then in a tight semi-final against Sao Paulo he won the first leg by setting up a move and rounding it off with a clever finish on the turn. In the first leg of the Final against Guadalajara he ghosted into the area to equalise with a header, before scoring again in the return.

And yet goalscoring is not even the main facet of his game. A versatile midfielder, he is stocky, with a low centre of gravity, neat, mobile and well balanced, comfortable in possession and as adept at slipping a pass through for a runner as he is making the forward run himself.

His last goal of the campaign was a mini advert for his considerable ability. On the edge of the Mexican side's penalty area he slipped through the heart of the defence and beat the advancing keeper with a subtle little chip to come up with a goal worthy of clinching any title.

Giuliano has received nothing of the media hype that has surrounded the promising Santos pair of Neymar and Ganso, but his achievements are at least as impressive. He certainly outshone Ganso in last year's World Youth Cup and the breadth of his talent means that there are few worries about his capacity to step up to a higher level of play. The fact that he is young enough to participate in the London Olympics in 2012 will surely boost his chances of a call-up to the youthful Brazil side that new coach Mano Menezes is currently building.

In the last five matches of this year's Libertadores Cup, Giuliano was on target four times – all excellent strikes at important moments – despite only being on the pitch for some 170 of the 450 minutes. He may well play for many years without ever again scoring such a profusion of vital goals.

During the campaign he said that he felt illuminated. Even if he is linking the play and setting up goals rather than scoring them, Giuliano promises to light up midfields for many years to come.

Tim Vickery

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Gigi Delneri
Unheralded coach tipped to lead Juventus revival

ITALY

WHITHER THE "Old Lady"? As the curtain rises on the new Serie A season, one of the many imponderables concern Juventus, still the aristocratic doyen of Italian football with 27 titles on the sideboard.

Past glory is all very well but since the 2006 Calciopoli scandal, it has been a "season of thin cows" in Turin. Relegated to Serie B by way of punishment for the involvement of director Luciano Moggi in the match-fixing scandal, Juventus bounced back at the first time of asking.

Since then, however, they have stuttered a little. Third and second in 2007-08 and 2008-09 suggested the Old Lady was ready to hit back with a vengeance last season, but in reality she flattered only to deceive. Just as many were expecting great things from a team boosted by the arrival of Brazil's Diego and Felipe Melo, everything went wrong.

Juventus ended up a miserable season in seventh place in Serie A, were eliminated from the Champions League before Christmas and dispatched from the Europa League by Fulham soon afterwards. Worse still, coach Ciro Ferrara, who had controversially replaced Claudio Ranieri in May 2009, was given the heave-ho in January, replaced by caretaker coach Alberto Zaccheroni.

For all his experience with Udinese, Milan, Internazionale and Lazio, "Zac" failed to stop the rot and Juventus never really got into the Champions League hunt. In the end, that failure cost the club dear, with April-June 2010 figures showing a 20 per cent loss by comparison with the previous year, and the board stating in early August that the financial year 2010-2011 is destined to return "a significant loss".

One unlikely venue and one unexpected name, however, may signal the start of a revival. The venue was Dublin's Tallaght Stadium, where Juve's competitive season began in late July with a 2-0 Europa League win over Shamrock Rovers, while the name is that of new coach Gigi Delneri.

When it became all too obvious that Ferrara was on his way out, many names were proposed as the new Juve long term saviour, with Guus Hiddink and Rafa Benitez topping the list, and old flames such as Giovanni Trapattoni and Dino Zoff also thrown into the mix. In the end, the club opted for Zaccheroni, with most believing he would be followed this summer by a big name coach.

It is in that sense that the choice of Delneri was unexpected, even if there is nothing second rate about his track record. Having burst into the big time as coach of Chievo 10 years ago, Delneri reinforced his top-flight credentials by guiding Sampdoria to their first-ever Champions League qualification last season, making the most of the mercurial talent of bad boy Antonio Cassano.

Helped by Giuseppe Marotta, who was with him at Sampdoria, Delneri has set about creating a new-look Juve featuring 23-year-old defender Leonardo Bonucci, 23-year-old midfielder Davide Lanzafame and 24-year-old full-back Marco Motta, alongside inherited talents such as 24-year-old midfielder Claudio Marchisio and 23-year-old wing-back Paolo De Ceglie.

It would also seem that important names are on the way out. World Cup-winning captain Fabio Cannavaro has already packed his bags for UAE club Al Ahli, Sebastian Giovinco joined Parma on loan, while David Trezeguet, Mauro Camoranesi and Fabio Grosso all seem destined to move. On top of that, 35-year-old Alessandro Del Piero looks like he will start the season as very much a second choice.

All in all, great changes are under way at Juventus, a club that once again has an Agnelli, Andrea, at the helm and which is currently rebuilding the Delle Alpi stadium, now to be called the Juventus Arena. Is a Juventus renaissance on the way? No promises can be made but, judging from their initial Europa League outings, the graph chart is showing an Old Lady in a distinctly upward mood.

Paddy Agnew

In charge...Delneri

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Keir Radnedge

Bids, visits and Downing Street gaffes

World Cup bidding campaigns welcome FIFA inspection teams

DANNY JORDAAN hit a penalty against a post as members of FIFA's World Cup inspection team strolled around Wembley Stadium on the opening day of their visit to assess England's bid to host the 2018 World Cup.

Jordaan, bid leader and then chief executive of the South African World Cup effort this past June and July, was not fazed. He is an old hand at laughing off the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune which crop up during the process.

And crop up they did. England's bid team had spent hours, days, weeks and months trying to impress upon the FIFA world at large that this time – unlike the 2006 bid – there could be no accusations of arrogance; that this was a bid grounded in practical demand and rooted commonsense.

So how were inspection leader Harold Mayne-Nicholls from Chile and his delegation greeted after travelling in from Heathrow Airport to No10 Downing Street? By deputy prime minister Nick Clegg telling them he believed England's bid "unbeatable".

Timing is crucial...the traditional six-year notice is no longer enough in this modern world

Not impressed...deputy prime minister Clegg (left) told FIFA inspection-team leader Mayne-Nicholls that England's bid was "unbeatable"

Observers' concerns that prime minister David Cameron's absence on holiday – albeit with FIFA president Sepp Blatter's telephone-call blessing – might misfire were thus reinforced.

At least London Underground was at its most efficient in transporting the delegation on to be welcomed by Fabio Capello at Wembley, where the opening match and the Final would be staged. After that it was off around the country before the FIFA team headed for Spain and Portugal.

Running up air miles

Mayne-Nicholls and Co are certainly running up the air miles. Before arriving in England they criss-crossed western and southern Russia visiting St Petersburg, Sochi, Kazan and Moscow, where prime minister Vladimir Putin – unlike Cameron – interrupted his holiday for a reception.

The Russian schedule was choreographed to take advantage of the presentational opportunities offered by preparatory work for a new stadium in St Petersburg, the 2013 World Student Games in Kazan and the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

Hence it must have been all the more galling to hear Mayne-Nicholls issue cautionary words in his farewell message as he told the Russians: "Should FIFA decide that the World Cup will go for the first time to Russia, work would need to start immediately, to guarantee that everything will be in place right in time."

Clearly he considered the Russians had left themselves a huge amount to do in terms of infrastructure – stadia, transport and accommodation – if they are to meet the 2018 deadline. The advice was all the more unusual in that generally only the most polite platitudes are exchanged at the end of such visits.

Timing is crucial and this is one reason for FIFA wanting a seven-and-a-half-year wind-up for 2018. Secretary general Jerome Valcke soon understood, as he led preparations for this past summer's 2010 finals in South Africa, that the traditional six-year notice is no longer enough in this complex modern world.

For one thing, the Confederations Cup is now staged by the host a year ahead of the World Cup and used as a test run – which means that much of the work has to be completed a year ahead of time.

The contrast between Russia's promises and the in-place-now vista in England and Spain may have been stark. But not, by any shade of the imagination, unbeatable. ●

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Barca: More than a debt

BARCELONA'S motto, in Catalan, is *"Mes que un club"* (more than a club). Now incoming president Sandro Rosell has owned up to what might be described as "more than a debt". His predecessor, Joan Laporta, had claimed a profit last year of €11million, yet Rosell, not to his own surprise it must be said, found a loss of €77.1m.

This was embarrassing, to say the least. Over the past two decades the club has tried to put behind it a history full of confusion over presidential policy, coaching changes and transfer-market muddles.

Waiting...Guardiola is yet to sign a new contract

Stylish trophy-winning success under Johan Cruyff and then Louis Van Gaal was brilliantly topped off when Pep Guardiola's team secured a unique six-title grand slam last year. But behind the scenes, life has not been quite as smooth and Guardiola's reluctance to commit himself to a long-term contract suggests he has a little less trust in the club's platform going forward.

Rosell, once Laporta's closest aide and the man who famously used his Nike experience to bring Ronaldinho to the club in 2003, fell out of favour inside the boardroom but not out in the stands of Camp Nou. He won the presidential election with an unprecedented landslide, only to find that an operating income of €408.9m, with expenditure of €477.9m, compared bleakly with Laporta's statement of revenue at €445.5m and costs of €429m, so the election result turned the club's net debt from €329m to €442m.

As new financial vice-president, Javier Faus, has noted, with deadpan understatement: "The club's sporting excellence over the past few years has not been reflected in a similar excellence in economic management."

Laporta, I understand, is bent on a career in politics. Not, one hopes, with ambitions to be finance minister.

Brazil: We will cope

FORGET all the prophets of doom, that is the message coming out of Brazil. The federal government claims that critics of the pace – or lack of it – of preparations for the 2014 World Cup finals are badly off target. And sports minister Orlando Silva and football confederation president Ricardo Teixeira have a perfect example on which to fall back as they take on the doubters.

South Africa's hosting of this summer's finals was enshrouded in doubt and criticism among many foreign officials and the international media right up until the first game in Soccer City on June 11.

Later, organising chairman Irvin Khoza and CEO Danny Jordaan were able to claim their national self-confidence had been entirely justified.

Hence the Brazilians believe they need not take criticism and doubt too seriously, as they start from the foundation of a far stronger economy and more developed society, and believe they will have no problem driving through a similar infrastructural and administrative project.

One of the most forthright public critics of certain aspects of the 2014 project has been FIFA's own secretary general, Jerome Valcke, who has been critical of Sao Paulo's failure to come up with a realistic redevelopment plan for the Morumbi Stadium, which should have been a shoo-in to host the opening match.

However, sports minister Silva has defined relations between the Brazilian government and FIFA as "positive and productive" and he clearly cannot wait for the world federation to set up its co-ordination office in Rio de Janeiro later this year, so Valcke can see, at first hand, the "stability which should be taken into account".

President Lula's government had budgeted an initial $13.2billion and Silva believes that FIFA has underestimated the state of progress because Valcke and Co had been focused on South Africa. He has no doubt Brazil will host "the most wonderful World Cup FIFA has ever held".

Hopefully the football will be better. This – rather than airports, hotels and tax breaks – is where the real credibility of the World Cup rests.

Critic...Valcke (right) with his boss, Blatter

No comment...Ferguson

Fergie's media phobia

ALEX FERGUSON'S six-year-long refusal to undertake interviews with BBC television and radio is to be reviewed by the Premier League at its September meeting.

Ferguson refused to speak to the corporation after Manchester United's 2-2 draw with Fulham in August, despite speculation that he would have a change of heart after representations by the league and the League Managers' Association.

Ferguson boycotted all BBC channels in anger at a programme that questioned the agent activities of his son, Jason. The league tightened its regulation this summer, obliging managers to respond to TV post-game interview requests – with Ferguson in mind.

At 68, however, it appears the United manager finds pretty much all media interviews tiresome. Newspaper reporters have only limited sympathy for the BBC's irritation as Ferguson has avoided the vast majority of post-match press conferences for years.

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40 top European

Who earned what from UEFA in last

Cashing in...Inter's Champions League victory earned them almost €50m

1 Internazionale
€48.759m
● Victory in the Champions League meant €29.2m in prize money, which included €9m as winners, and a further €19.559m from the TV pool

2 Manchester United
€45.811m
● Despite only reaching the quarter-finals, United received more from the TV pool than any other club – €28.811m – because of the value of the English TV market

3 Bayern Munich
€44.862m
● The beaten Champions League finalists received €19.462 from the TV pool and €25.4m in prize money

4 Barcelona
€39.061m
● The 2009 European champions received €18.461m from the Spanish section of the TV pool

5 Arsenal
€33.359m
● The beaten Champions League quarter-finalists received a total of €17m in prize money and €16.359 from the TV pool

6 Chelsea
€32.167m
● Despite being beaten in the first knockout round of the Champions League, Chelsea still received €18.067m from the TV pool

7 Liverpool
€31.852m
● Exit at the Champions League group stage meant that Liverpool received €9.1m in prize money, but their share of the English TV pool provided an additional €19.777m. They then earned an extra €2.975m from their run in the Europa League knockout phase

8 Bordeaux
€29.74m
● The Champions League quarter-finalists received €11.94m from the TV pool and €17.8m in prize money

9 Lyon
€29.06m
● Despite reaching the Champions League semi-finals, Lyon only received €8.06m from the French section of the TV pool

10 Wolfsburg
€28.197m
● The German champions went out in the Champions League group stages but still earned €16.906 from the German section of the TV pool. They earned an extra €2.191m from the Europa League

11 Olympiakos
€27.694m
● The Greek champions went out in the Champions League first knockout round but took €14.794m from the TV pool

12 Real Madrid
€26.825m
● Defeat in the Champions League first knockout round gave Madrid €10.7m in prize money, along with €13.125m from the TV pool

13 Sevilla
€24.373m
● The Spanish club earned €10.673m from their country's Champions League TV pool

14 Milan
€23.766m
● The Italians earned €10.866m from their country's Champions League TV pool

15 Stuttgart
€23.346m
● The Germans earned €10.446m from their country's Champions League TV pool

16 Fiorentina
€22.431m
● The Italians earned €8.331m from their country's Champions League TV pool

17 Juventus
€22.247m
● Despite exiting at the group stage, the Italians still earned €11.952m in TV revenue from the Champions League. That was topped up with another €0.795m from their participation in the Europa League

18 Atletico Madrid
€21.617m
● The Spanish club earned €8.3m in prize money from the Champions League before winning the Europa League, for which they earned €6.538m

19 Besiktas
€21.116m
● The Turkish club took their country's Champions League TV payment of €12.816m

20 CSKA Moscow
€20.992m
● The Russian Champions League quarter-finalists got €4.792m from the TV pool

21 Porto
€18.734m
● The Portuguese champions took their country's Champions League TV pool payment of €5.434m

22 Unirea Urziceni
€18.188m
● The Romanians failed to make the Champions League knockout stage but still took €8.22m from the TV pool. They then earned €0.468m from the Europa League.

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money earners

season's Champions League and Europa League

23 Marseille
€17.7m
● The French club missed out on the Champions League knockout stage but still earned €7.862m from the Champions League TV pool. They earned an additional €0.738m from the Europa League

24 Rangers
€17.124m
• The Scottish champions failed to make the Champions League knockout stage but still made €9.224m from the TV pool

25 AZ Alkmaar
€16.278m
• The Dutch champions earned €7.578m from the Champions League TV pool

26 Rubin Kazan
€14.344m
• The Russians earned €4.124m from the Champions League TV pool and €1.12m from the Europa League knockout stage

27 Standard Liege
€12.438m
• The Belgians received only €2.822m from the Champions League TV pool and €0.916m from the Europa League

28 Dynamo Kiev
€12.322m
• The Ukrainians earned the basic €7.1m paid to all 32 Champions League group teams, plus an added €1.6m performance bonus and a TV payment of €3.622m

29 Zurich
€10.242m
• The Swiss champions earned €1.942m in TV revenue from the Champions League

30 Fulham
€10.010m
• The Europa League runners-up earned €2m for their Final appearance, along with an additional €5.190m in TV money

31 APOEL
€10m
• The Cypriot club earned €1.7m from the Champions League TV pool

32 Debrecen
€8.966m
• The Hungarians, with no points gained in the Champions League group stage, received no performance bonus, and €1.866m from the TV pool

33 Maccabi Haifa
€8.53m
• The Israelis received €1.43m in TV revenue from the Champions League

34 Hamburg
€7.672m
• The German club reached the Europa League semi-finals and earned €4.712m from the competition's TV pool

35 Werder Bremen
€6.629m
• Bremen reached the final 16 of the Europa League and got €4.619m from the TV pool.

36 Fenerbahce
€4.954m
• The Turks only reached the Europa League round of 32 but earned €3.274m in TV money

37 Galatasaray
€4.894m
• The Istanbul club earned €3.274m in TV money in the Europa League round of 32

38 Everton
€4.763m
• Reached Europa League round of 32 and earned €3.323m in TV money

39 Valencia
€4.745m
• The Europa League quarter-finalists earned €2.495m in TV money

40 Hertha Berlin
€4.16m
• The Germans only reached the Europa League round of 32 but earned €2.66m in TV money

DISPATCHES

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All aboard...Ortiz (left) celebrates promotion this summer with players and supporters in Hercules' home city of Alicante

Fixers, bungs

Serious allegations of match-fixing in Spain's second division are seemingly being ignored

SPAIN

SID LOWE in Madrid

HIS NAME IS Jorge Lopez Marco but everyone calls him "Tote". Everybody, it seems, except for Enrique Ortiz, who is the majority shareholder at Hercules – the newly promoted club where Tote plays at centre-forward.

Instead, Ortiz calls Tote "pirate". At least he does during a series of alleged conversations that were revealed over the summer. And, to judge by the content of those conversations, during which Tote allegedly tells Ortiz "this is

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Photo: Offside/Marca

and the "pirate"

a war", the nickname may even be appropriate.

The conversations were published by the Spanish newspaper *El Pais* and formed part of an investigation into corruption on Spain's east coast, the so-called "Caso Brugal". The investigations involved a wire tap on Ortiz's phone. No one was trying to find evidence of match fixing – attention was instead trained on the construction industry – but that was what they found. Somehow, *El Pais* got hold of either the tapes or the transcripts and published them.

The recorded conversations, which appeared to reveal Ortiz calling Tote to arrange to buy key matches as Hercules battled for promotion not only imply the fixing of games, they also suggest that third-party incentives at best, and buying of opponents at worse, are widespread in Spain's second division.

During one conversation, which begins with Ortiz saying, "Hey, pirate, what's going on?", Tote notes that Hercules' promotion rivals are offering money to Hercules' opponents – an incentive to win for sides that would otherwise have nothing to play for.

Found themselves outbid

The conversation follows immediately after a 1-1 draw with Girona. The accusation is that Hercules tried to buy off Girona – an earlier conversation before the match has Tote saying to Ortiz: "Don't worry, it'll get done" – but found themselves outbid. The conclusion the men draw appears to be that Hercules need to beat the offer in order for their opponents to let themselves get beaten.

"Now you can see what the others [teams] had," says Tote.

"They were all *primados* [an incentive to win]?" replies Ortiz.

"Listen, 300,000 [euros], 25,000 [euros] each [player] from the four [teams] at the top [of the table]," Tote explains. "So they can't say that no one is handing out money."

"And if they draw?" asks Ortiz.

"Half."

"What sons of bitches. Right, well we can't get it wrong next time. You've got friends there haven't you?"

"Yes. The thing is that I can't go. I got a [yellow] card [and with it a suspension]. That son of a bitch showed me a card today."

"It doesn't matter. You go."

"I can leave it to Abraham [Paz, a team-mate], there'll be no problem."

"You can both go."

A text message from Tote in preparation for another match runs: "Get the money ready for these [guys]. We have to give it to them on Sunday. 250,000, plus 150,000."

The reply, from Ortiz, insists: "Be careful, messages get recorded – especially ones from your boss [himself]" – to which Tote responds: "OK, the money is for the promotion party... you're invited of course."

Tote also takes advantage to get some more money for his own team-mates: "Give some money to the lads too so that they eat up the pitch. The others [the opposition] don't want to [allegedly: sell themselves] because they have got 300,000 [in third-party incentives] to beat us –

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everyone's giving them something." The sense of need is reinforced by the simplest of remarks from Tote: "Pay Nastic [or] they're going to fuck everything up [for us]."

Another conversation has Ortiz talking to an unnamed family member. He starts talking about a game against Cordoba in which the goalkeeper, Raul Navas, let in a goal after allegedly taking a bribe,

"First we were going to give them 200,000 but they didn't want to so we took the goalkeeper and gave him 100,000," says Ortiz. "On the first goal by Tote he dives the wrong way...it was *hostia* [incredible], man."

But, adds Ortiz: "We offered Salamanca 100,000 and they refused ...but we scored four anyway."

Even more widespread

When the story broke, the response from Abraham Paz seemed telling. There was no categorical denial; instead there was bluster and, more importantly, a suggestion that match fixing might be even more widespread. "They should investigate 15 years of games to see how teams went up last year and the years before that," he said. "The way the country is right now there are more important things to worry about than what is going on with Hercules."

That suspicion is deepened by the fact that, two seasons ago, similar allegations were made against Malaga after a taped conversation between the Real Sociedad president Inaki Badiola and the former Tenerife player Jesuli included Jesuli uttering the words "they sold themselves". The "they" in question were Jesuli and his team-mates. The player claimed to have collected "6,000 or 7,000" before his side lost 2-1 to Malaga, sending their opponents up. It followed hidden-camera footage that seemed to show Lorenzo Sanz, the father of Malaga president Fernando Sanz, offering an opponent 250,000 to win.

This is remarkably similar and the consequences will be identical as they were back then. Exactly the same thing will happen...absolutely nothing.

In the wake of the allegations, Hercules publicly insisted that anything that Ortiz may or may not have done was done on an individual level and had nothing to do with the club. Meanwhile, Sonia Castedo, the mayoress of Alicante, insisted it was "an orchestrated campaign against the city of Alicante and against Hercules". Two weeks after the transcripts were released, Ortiz finally broke his silence, describing the conversations as "false" and "non-existent".

> "Two seasons ago, similar allegations were made against Malaga. Exactly the same thing will happen... absolutely nothing"

Struggle...Hercules take on Girona (in red) in the second division last season

Photo: Offside/Marca

That was only natural. After all, by the time he spoke out, Ortiz did so knowing that there would be no investigation. A state attorney had described the case as a "grave fraud" but nothing would be done. A judge had ruled that he would not be releasing the transcripts to the footballing authorities, the Spanish Football Federation and the Supreme Sports Council.

There were three reasons. One, they were part of an on-going and entirely separate investigation; two, they were deemed an invasion of privacy; and three, match fixing is not actually a criminal offence – at least not until December 22 when a new sports law comes into force. While Spain's footballing authorities could have taken the decision to investigate and impose sporting sanctions if they found evidence of wrongdoing, in the absence of legal backing and hard evidence, they chose not to.

Virtually no one complained. Those that spoke out were mainly isolated voices and often interested ones – teams, like Betis, who just missed out on promotion and hoped to benefit from a ban on Hercules. *El Pais*' reporting contrasted markedly with a sports media that largely noted it briefly, then moved on to more important things – like the transfer market. Or Cristiano Ronaldo's painted toenails. The country's best-selling newspaper, *Marca*, barely mentioned it.

The inaction of the authorities was depressingly familiar. Just as Malaga's return to the top flight happened under a cloud only for the cloud to disappear, there were no fines, no points bans, no relegations. No nothing. In Spain, the Italian Calciopoli scandal was taken as evidence of what they always knew about footballing rivals, but at least Italy investigated. In Spain, not one player was even called forward to testify. In fact, there was silence.

This summer, another scandal broke. And the greatest scandal of all is that there was no scandal at all. ●

Appealing...Hercules' skipper Tote

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Cash kings of St Petersburg

Zenit are spending their way back to the top of the Russian league

RUSSIA

VICTOR GUSEV in Moscow

CHAOS REIGNED in Russia this summer, with forest fires and temperatures of almost 40 degrees forcing matches to be abandoned and throwing the league schedule into disarray.

But amid the confusion, one thing was clear: Zenit St Petersburg are closing in on the league title, nine points clear of second place and the only unbeaten side in the league at the halfway stage.

Zenit finished in third spot last season – a result that was deemed not good enough by the owners, Gazprom, who are the country's biggest gas company and who are desperate for Zenit to win back the title for the first time in 2007.

Earlier this year, Gazprom hired Luciano Spalletti, with the former Roma coach replacing Anatoli Davydov, who had served as interim manager after Dick Advocaat left the club in the middle of last season and later became Russia's national boss.

By mid-August, Zenit had yet to lose a game under the 51-year-old Italian's watch. In addition to their run in the league, they won the Russian Cup last May, and that is likely to be the first in a long list of future trophies as they are by far the richest club in the league.

In this summer's transfer window, they have outspent all their rivals in a bid to build a squad that can compete in the Champions League and they reportedly paid £18million for Porto defender Bruno Alves and £6m for Serbia defender Alexander Lukovic.

Bruno Alves will join his Portugal team-mate Danny, who was acquired from Dynamo Moscow two years ago for £24m – making him the league's most expensive player and its outstanding playmaker.

Zenit have also signed the best local talent, notably Rubin's captain and playmaker Sergei Semak and leading striker Aleksandr Bukharov. The two Russia internationals were key players in Rubin's consecutive league victories in 2008 and 2009 and were the summer's big surprise movers. The Kazan club tried to compensate for their loss with the purchases of Sibir's veteran striker Aleksei Medvedev and Nigeria World Cup forward Obafemi Martins.

Zenit's policy of getting the cream of the crop has, naturally, provoked jealousy from their rivals in Moscow, with CSKA being the only team capable of signing comparable reinforcements in the middle of the season. The Army club signed Ivory Coast striker Seydou Doumbia from Young Boys of Switzerland for £8m and also paid £6.5m for Serbian winger Zoran Tosic, who had been on loan at Koln from Manchester United.

Love badly needed

CSKA also re-signed the 2008 Russian League top scorer Vagner Love. The striker had spent a year on loan in his native Brazil and was not that keen on a return to Russia from Flamengo However, CSKA badly need him for the league run-in – if not for the title, then certainly for their battle with Rubin for the second Champions League berth.

The other Moscow teams, Spartak and Dynamo, responded with a couple of high-profile signings. The red-and-whites paid Celtic £10m for Aiden McGeady and the Irish winger will be paid around £1.2m a year.

> **By mid August, Zenit had yet to lose a game under Luciano Spalletti's watch**

Meanwhile, Dynamo finally solved their centre-forward problem by bringing in Kevin Kuranyi. In October 2008, the striker had walked out of the Germany dressing room at the Luzhniki stadium after learning that national coach Joachim Low had not included him in the line-up against Russia. Now the ex-Schalke striker is back in Moscow, where he teams up with the Ukraine's Andriy Voronin, formerly of Liverpool and a number of Bundesliga clubs. Kuranyi will be reportedly getting around £5m a year from Dynamo.

Lokomotiv, the 2002 and 2004 Russian champions, did not win a single away game in the first half of the championship. The "Railwaymen" are stuck in the middle of the table but can take some comfort in Oleksandr Aliyev's scoring streak. The Ukraine midfielder leads the scoring list for goals coming from long and medium range. He joined Loko from Dynamo Kyiv together with coach Yuri Semin, who returned to his old club last year after a spell in the Ukraine. The recent resignation of club president Nikolai Naumov was another sign of the problems surrounding the team owned by the once mighty Russian Railways company.

The big teams may be joined in the race for the 2011 European cup places by upcoming teams Spartak Nalchik and Rostov, who had made the top five by mid-August. They are both well-organised clubs who avoid the ups and downs of their "big brothers" by relying on steady progress and support.

Europa League and Russian league newcomers Sibir Novosibirsk are battling relegation alongside Krylya Sovetov and Amkar Perm. ●

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Financial clout...Zenit's Fernando Meira (right) gets the better of Dynamo's big signing Kuranyi

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Home benefits

The 2022 World Cup bid may have been fanciful but the domestic scene in Indonesian is in good shape

INDONESIA

MICHAEL CHURCH in Jakarta

WHEN Indonesia's bid to host the 2022 World Cup was pushed aside by FIFA earlier this year it came as little surprise. Universally viewed as the outsider in the battle for the hosting rights, the country's hopes of becoming the first south-east Asian nation to successfully bid for the finals were always fanciful.

With a national team ranked well outside the world's top 100, and with their only World Cup appearance coming in 1938 when the country was known as the Dutch East Indies, Indonesia lacked the footballing pedigree to be taken seriously.

From a financial and logistical perspective, the ability of a country so disparate – Indonesia's 240 million inhabitants are scattered over more than 6,000 islands – and so poor, to build the venues, roads and hotels required to host an event of the magnitude of the World Cup always looked overly ambitious.

But at the heart of the failed attempt was a much bigger issue, which centres around the lack of support for the bid from the country's president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who has rarely seen eye-to-eye with the power-brokers of Indonesian football.

As a result, the bid launched by the Football Association of Indonesia (PSSI) was always speculative and heavily dependant on the outcome of last year's presidential elections.

Despite Yudhoyono's status as the incumbent and favourite to retain his position at the country's helm, PSSI officials did not secure his backing and instead allied themselves to his rival and former Indonesia vice-president, Jusuf Kalla.

Kalla, a close friend of PSSI president Nurdin Halid, backed the bid and pledged his support if he became president. But Yudhoyono won the election by a landslide and Indonesia's slim hopes of hosting the World Cup all but evaporated.

There was worse to come for Nurdin and his allies within the PSSI when Yudhoyono – a critic of the way football had been run in Indonesia in the past – called for a National Football Congress to be held in an attempt to solve the problems.

While there has been no overt move to oust Nurdin from his position – such a strategy would result in heavy sanctions from FIFA – the pressure continues to mount on the PSSI president, who will stand for re-election next year.

"We'll just seek recommendations for the PSSI and, of course, they are not legally binding," said National Football Congress chairman Agum Gumelar, who was PSSI president before Nurdin.

"It will be up to the PSSI whether they employ those recommendations. But the pressure on them will be strong to reform the association and revamp national football."

Others, however, want a more hardline approach taken against Nurdin and the current regime.

"The PSSI must be changed totally," said former national team coach Sinyo Aliandoe. "Nurdin has to step down and the PSSI rejuvenated. If he refuses to step down, the National Sports Committee must suspend the PSSI's membership."

Robust health

Despite the fractured political situation, the domestic game – on the field at least – is in robust health with Arema winning the league for the first time, while attendances across the country have been strong.

The renaissance began in 2008 when the national league underwent a significant overhaul and the Indonesian Super League was created.

The top flight was whittled down from an unwieldy 36 clubs to a more manageable 18, ending a system in which the upper tier divided into two divisions before the title was decided by a series of centralised play-offs.

Now, with teams playing in a more conventional and coherent format, the benefits are being felt both in terms of attendances and television viewing figures.

To date, though, those improvements have not been mirrored either in the fortunes of the national side or at continental club level.

Only a dream...Yudhoyono never backed Indonesia's 2022 World Cup bid

> **"The PSSI must be changed totally and Nurdin has to step down"**
>
> *Former national coach Sinyo Aliandoe calls for the head of Indonesia's football chief to help lift the country's fortunes*

Indonesia failed to qualify for the finals of the 2011 Asian Cup, to be played in Qatar in January, and the team have slipped far behind regional rivals Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam.

In addition, no Indonesian club has reached the knockout phase of the Asian Champions League since its inception in 2002 and it is these disappointments that Nurdin will be forced to address when he stands for re-election.

"Only PSSI members, which includes the PSSI provincial offices and clubs, can ask for my resignation before my second term ends by calling for an extraordinary general meeting," says Nurdin. "So far, none of them has asked for that meeting." ●

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Padania on top

The southern Italians were the winners of the fourth VIVA World Cup

MALTA

STEVE MENARY in Gozo

Heading for the Final...Iraqi Kurdistan (in white) overcame Two Sicilies

Photo: Milena Kit

WHERE NOW for the VIVA World Cup? The short answer is Iraqi Kurdistan in 2012 after Padania won the fourth VWC – a tournament for "nations" not in FIFA – by beating Iraqi Kurdistan 1-0 in the Final in June on the Maltese island of Gozo.

"Gozo was a high-level tournament regarding the quality of the matches," says Jean-Luc Kit, secretary general of the organisers, the New Federation Board (NF Board). "Now we are on the way to Iraqi Kurdistan 2012, which is a big, big programme."

The 2010 VWC did not get the same media profile as last year's event in northern Italy but it still saw a record number of entrants and the tightest games yet.

The first VWC in 2006 was a three-team event marred by withdrawals, internecine rows between members and massive scores, including a 21-1 win by the Sapmi – better known as Lapland – over Monaco in the Final.

Both teams were absent from Gozo but six teams took part in a competition staged without interference by the Malta Football Association.

For the first time, an established international took part, with Sheffield United striker Danijel Bogdanovic, who has won 29 caps for Malta, captaining the hosts.

"The organisers did a good job structuring the competition but there is need for much more work and hopefully more teams to compete in it," says Bogdanovic.

Gozo were in their second VWC and faced holders Padania in their first game, losing a tight match 2-1. They still had a chance of making the semi-finals, but Bogdanovic missed their next game and the hosts conceded a penalty 15 seconds into their match with Occitania – a French side whose players speak the medieval language of Occitan. Playing in their third VWC, Occitania ran out convincing 5-0 winners and qualified behind Padania.

Ancient kingdom

Iraqi Kurdistan set down a marker in their first group match, winning 4-1 against Two Sicilies, a team representing the ancient kingdom of southern Italy who were making their VWC debut. The Italians fielded players from clubs including Cisterna Latina, Terracina and Venafro and secured second spot with a penalty from Sezze's Pietro Cappuccilli for a slender 1-0 victory over Provence.

In the semi-finals, Occitania took the lead after 37 minutes against Iraqi Kurdistan through Eric Gamet of Clermont Herault. Playing in their third VWC, the Kurds equalised in the second half through Qamaran Ahmad, before substitute Karzaz Mohammed snatched a late winner to set up a repeat of the 2009 Final.

A 2-0 win over Two Sicilies took Padania through to a third successive Final, where a solitary goal from Luca Mosti of US Inveruno sealed victory over Iraqi Kurdistan.

Highlights of the tournament were shown on Kurdish television but, unlike last year, the Final was not screened live, denting hopes of drumming up some interest in the 2012 tournament.

The NF Board delayed the next VWC by 12 months to avoid a clash with the Island Games football tournament, which saw 16 teams enter last year.

So far, nine different teams have played in the four VWCs but how many sides travel to Iraqi Kurdistan remains to be seen as the travel costs will be far higher than at any of the previous tournaments. ●

Champions...Padania celebrate after their 1-0 win over Iraqi Kurdistan

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Changing tack

Mano Menezes looks set to take the national team in an exciting new direction

TIM VICKERY in Rio de Janieiro

ANDRE KFOURI in Brazil's sports daily *Lance!* caught the mood after Mano Menezes got off to an excellent start as national team coach with a 2-0 win away to the United States when he wrote: "Perhaps we had become so accustomed to the counter-attack that a team which exchanges 600 passes in one game has opened our eyes.

"Maybe we had become so conditioned to expect strength and speed that we have been surprised by talent and creativity."

It would, of course, be foolish to read too much into one international friendly, especially in August, and Kfouri conceded this in his article. Menezes was quick to do the same in his post-match press conference, but it does seem undeniable that Brazil have embarked on a new direction, radically different from recent times but more in line with the historic identity of the national team.

He has carried out an extensive rebuilding job. Only four of the World Cup squad were chosen, and debuts were given to four players (plus three substitutes), including the much-vaunted Neymar and Paulo Henrique Ganso. But more important than any individual showing against the USA was the teams' collective philosophy. The idea of play was not based solely on quick breaks but on possession – moving the ball fluidly between the lines, creating midfield triangles, switching play from one flank to the other and setting up two-against-one situations in dangerous areas.

Menezes is keen to stress that his preference for 4-2-3-1 is in line with the trend of the world's best sides. "I like the system," he said on his presentation. "It gives you attacking strength, with options down the flanks, players arriving from deep, central midfielders breaking forward."

In effect he was announcing the end of the Gilberto Silva era, where Brazil midfields have been filled with players whose duties were almost exclusively defensive. This was seen as necessary in order to free the forward bursts of the full-backs, but under Menezes the balance of their game has changed. They are welcome to make an attacking contribution, but more as an element of surprise. They will also have to take on more marking responsibilities. Menezes said that selecting the full-backs could prove his biggest problem as the widespread use of three centre-backs in domestic football means that many candidates fail to develop defensive skills.

> **"I like the system. It gives you attacking strength with options down the flanks, players arriving from deep, central midfielders breaking forward"**
>
> *New Brazil coach Mano Menezes*

Midfield superiority

Against the US, however, Brazil were able to dominate possession without being threatened. There will, of course, be stiffer tests to come. Part of the story of the game in New Jersey was the superiority of Brazil's 4-2-3-1 over the 4-4-2 of the USA. Brazil consistently had the extra man in midfield: usually Robinho, who floated infield, found space, orchestrated the play and started fires that Bob Bradley's men were unable to extinguish. Future opponents will surely do their homework and set up their side in a way that makes them much harder to pass through.

It is, indeed, early days, but it already seems that the defeat to Holland in the World Cup quarter-finals, coupled with the triumph of pass-masters Spain, has had a beneficial effect on Brazilian football. It could also be argued that Muricy Ramalho's refusal to become Brazil coach, opening the door for Menezes, might have been a happy accident.

Ramalho's track record may point to his competence, but – as a died-in-the-wool pragmatist with a preference for a three centre-back system – he would have been very unlikely to take Brazil on the fascinating ride that Menezes seems poised to embark on. ●

Extensive rebuilding...Menezes

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New boys...Ganso (left) congratulates fellow debutant Neymar on his first-half goal at the New Meadowlands Stadium

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Row over Robben

Bayern are seething over the injury suffered by their winger at the World Cup

GERMANY

NICK BIDWELL in Munich

ARJEN ROBBEN'S notoriously frail physique has long proved a source of irritation for his coaches; indeed, his Chelsea boss, Jose Mourinho, once accused him of going through the motions to spare himself. But of all the Dutch winger's many muscular glitches, none has caused as much controversy as the 5cm tear Bayern Munich doctor Hans-Wilhelm Muller-Wohlfahrt detected in the player's left hamstring during a pre-season check-up, a diagnosis which will keep Robben out until October.

Losing their most important player for the first two months of the new season was always going be a bitter pill for Bayern to swallow; even more so when they cannot shake the feeling that the Dutch FA (KNVB) is entirely to blame: that after suffering an injury to the same hamstring on the eve of the World Cup, Robben was unwisely rushed back to play in the finals.

The 26-year-old, recently voted footballer of the year in Germany, missed Holland's first two games in South Africa but – thanks to a fitness programme devised by wonder-healer physio Dick Van Toorn – he started each of the next four games in the knock-out phase, scoring twice as the *Oranje* went all the way to the Final.

Hamstrung...Robben will be out of action until October

Energising pot-shots

There is, of course, no chance of Bayern's Dutch coach Louis Van Gaal siding with the land of his fathers. Like all emissaries of leading clubs, nothing energises him more than a few pot-shots at a federation and he has denounced the KNVB for abusing Robben's competitive spirit.

"Every pro wants to play in a World Cup and will do anything to make it happen," stormed Van Gaal, a former Holland boss. "We have coaches and doctors to protect the player. It wasn't done. I called Robben often during the World Cup to warn him. Everyone knows he wasn't in good shape."

Bayern say they have a watertight case for substantial compensation. In their eyes, Holland's medical team were either negligent in not assessing the injury properly or irresponsible in allowing an unfit player onto the park. Bayern also claim they repeatedly asked the Dutch camp to allow Muller-Wohlfahrt – in South Africa in his capacity as the *Nationalmannschaft* medic – to examine Robben, only for each request to be turned down.

> "Bayern say they have a watertight case for substantial compensation"

"We now have to pay the bill for Robben's lengthy absence," says Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge. "So it's only fair the Dutch, in turn, meet our costs."

For reasons of history, culture and proximity, the two countries have a history of footballing strife, and in this case Holland boss Bert Van Marwijk strongly believes Bayern are being disingenuous, claiming: "We didn't force Arjen at any moment during the World Cup and discussed everything we did with the player himself. I'm sure he didn't return home after the World Cup with an injury.

"Someone with this kind of injury couldn't have made the sort of runs Arjen did well into extra time. Bayern are trying to make our federation look bad and that's unacceptable."

What does Robben think of it all? Sensibly steering a neutral path, he says the hamstring felt fine during his three-week holiday and he had no idea something was badly wrong. But he does admit that he knew he was taking a risk by competing in South Africa.

Germany's fine third place at the World Cup saw the German FA give two-year contract extensions to now untouchable *Bundestrainer* Joachim Low and his staff. In February, when previous negotiations broke down acrimoniously, Low had seemed a lame duck, with pundits lining up to lambast him. What a difference a good tournament makes. ●

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Baxter's dilemma

The English coach has been caught out by growing Finnish ambition

FINLAND

EGAN RICHARDSON in Helsinki

IT HAS BEEN a confusing time to follow Finland's national team after Stuart Baxter was told he was not allowed to take a job as director of football at Celtic because the Finnish FA wanted a full-time coach.

In early August the Scottish media reported that Baxter had claimed he would be a "consultant, in inverted commas" to Celtic's young manager Neil Lennon – which came as news to most people in Finland.

Given that national coach Baxter had been hired in spite of his reluctance to live in the country – a source of bitter resentment from many of the Englishman's critics – this kind of publicity was always likely to provoke a strong reaction.

Within a day the story had been denied by the Finnish FA and Baxter. It was then confirmed and later denied by Celtic boss Lennon. Baxter told the Finnish press he would answer the phone when called as a "professional courtesy", something he does with many coaches, and that there was no special arrangement with Celtic.

Sport weekly *Urheilulehti* reported that the Finnish FA were inclined not to renew his contract when it runs out after the Euro 2012 qualifiers. The paper also claimed that the FA had refused a request to install former Haka and HJK coach Keith Armstrong as his full-time assistant and that Inter Turku coach Job Dragtsma was under consideration to be Baxter's replacement. All in all, it looked as though Baxter's flirtation with Celtic had been prudent career planning rather than a sneaky underhand move.

Baxter is unlucky in that Finnish attitudes and expectations are changing just when the squad is getting older and slower. It would appear that a large chunk of his time is spent trying to persuade the older players in the squad not to retire – a task at which he has been relatively successful – but there is a shift in perception and he is under more pressure than most of his predecessors.

> "Finns are beginning to tire of the cycle of under-achievement"

A goalless draw in Liechtenstein and two meek 3-0 losses to Russia, coupled with a bizarre refusal to put AZ Alkmaar's Niklas Moisander in the starting line-up until too late in the World Cup campaign, have all contributed to the disenchantment that Baxter has not improved on his predecessor, Liverpool's Roy Hodgson.

Finnish style

Baxter was meant to teach a good defensive team how to attack. Establishing a "Finnish" style of play was another target, as was bringing through the next generation of players and "doing well" in the qualification group – something that is defined by many Finns as finishing third: outside the qualification spots, but within reach of them, and in the third pot for the next qualification draw.

This modest goal has been a constant since the 1990s, but Finns are beginning to tire of the cycle of underachievement. It's unfortunate for Baxter that Finnish football is in the throes of a wide-ranging debate, with everything from the number of clubs in professional and semi-professional football to that "Finnish style of play" under discussion.

The FA's leadership is younger and more dynamic than it has ever been and they have ruffled a lot of feathers in their efforts to boost elite football. They are less likely to cut the national team slack than previous incumbents.

It's doubtful how much of this debate Baxter understands – as a non-Finnish speaker living in another country – but he does not really need to. If he helps Finland finish above Sweden and qualify for the Euro 2012 finals, he will become a national hero. If he doesn't, the indications are that he will no longer be Finland boss.

It may seem logical to outsiders, but that's a novel situation for Finnish football fans – and one that has been all too rare in the country's past footballing history. ●

Stranger in a strange land...Baxter has been criticised for living outside of Finland and not learning the language

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Brave new era

New national coach Cesare Prandelli is ringing the changes

ITALY

PADDY AGNEW in Rome

THE BRAVE NEW ERA has begun. After a summer of intense World Cup frustration, Italy's new coach, ex-Fiorentina boss Cesare Prandelli, boldly signalled his plans with his squad for a mid-August London friendly against fellow World Cup flops Ivory Coast.

Among the 23 players called up, there was only one survivor, Roma's Daniele De Rossi, from the 14 players who appeared in the 2006 World Cup Final in Berlin. No less than 10 of the *convocati* (call-ups) were uncapped players, while another four – Marco Borriello, Leonardo Bonucci, Mattia Cassani and Claudio Marchisio – had only 14 caps between them.

But perhaps Prandelli's strongest signal was the inclusion of three players controversially omitted from Marcello Lippi's South Africa squad: Antonio Cassano, the uncapped Mario Balotelli and the Brazil-born striker Amauri, also uncapped. While the latter's World Cup exclusion was more than legitimate, given his poor season with Juventus, debates about Cassano and Balotelli raged all winter, with many perturbed by Lippi's decision to ignore two of the greatest talents in contemporary Italian football.

No less intriguing were the other eight uncapped players called-up by Prandelli: goalkeepers Salvatore Sirigu (Palermo) and Emiliano Viviano (Bologna), defenders Luca Antonini (Milan), Davide Astori (Cagliari), Stefano Lucchini (Sampdoria), Cristian Molinaro (Stuttgart) and Marco Motta (Juventus), and midfielder Andrea Lazzari (Cagliari).

When he met the media in early July for his first official outing as the new *Commissario Tecnico*, Prandelli had promised changes. Not only has he brought down the curtain on the era of Lippi's "Berlin Heroes", only nine members of the South Africa squad have so far survived: goalkeeper Federico Marchetti, defenders Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini, midfielders De Rossi, Marchisio, Riccardo Montolivo, Angelo Palombo and Simone Pepe, and striker Fabio Quagliarella.

In one bold move, Prandelli reduced the average age from 28.9 in South Africa to 25.7. Obviously, these are early days with the coach finding his way – and in that regard, he may have learned more than we think from the 1-0 loss to the Ivory Coast – but the signs are encouraging.

Renovation and rejuvenation

In the wake of South Africa, there has been much talk about renovation and rejuvenation, and it has long been noted that Italian clubs and coaches are highly conservative in promoting youth. The average Serie A player age last season was 27.44 as compared to 26.69 in Spain, 26.57 in the Premier League and 25.9 in the Bundesliga. More telling, though, is the percentage of youth-team players who make it through to play for the likes of Arsenal, Barcelona and Internazionale.

While the French Ligue 1 can boast a 26.8 per cent presence of youth-team players developed "in house" – ie those who have spent at least three years with the club's youth set-up between the ages of 15 and 21 – Italy scores an embarrassing 8.1 per cent. As for the other major leagues, La Liga (21.6 per cent), the Bundesliga (17.8 per cent) and the Premier League (16.5 per cent) all do considerably better.

The Italian FA vice-president, former Milan midfielder Demetrio Albertini, argues that the time has come for the bigger Italian clubs to follow the English and/or Spanish models, developing a reserve team rather than a youth team and one that plays in the lower professional divisions not a youth league, saying: "If you look at our under-19 team's failure in this summer's European Championship, you could see they were as talented as the others but they seemed less ready from the competitive viewpoint."

On the subject of readiness, it is at least worth asking if Italian football is ready for another wholesale cultural change. Italian football fans are well used to one Sunday evening and two Saturday evening games, with teams involved in European competition occasionally allowed to play on Friday nights. TV contract requirements this year want Sunday lunchtime and Monday night games too. Senior Catholic Church figures in the country have expressed their reservation about the Sunday "pitch invasion" – the ecclesiastical pitch, that is.

> "Only nine members of the South Africa squad have so far survived"

Monsignor Carlo Mazza, a former director of the Sport and Tourism office of the Italian bishops' conference, said: "To sit down by the TV at 12.30, when you are about to have lunch, seems to me an invasion of the pitch. Family events are important social moments – we can't give them away in favour of other events. This spreading of football all over man's time is too much, but if we then upset Sunday, the best day in the week, the most significant, the most elevated and the most human, then where is our society going?"

One suspects we will hear more on this during the season – and, indeed, more on refereeing controversies, given that former referee Stefano Braschi, who has taken over from Pierluigi Collina in charge of refereeing match appointments, has promised a "zero tolerance" policy, with both violent play and exaggerated verbal dissent prompting immediate red cards.

It also remains to be seen if Braschi and company will gain much from the absurd decision of state broadcaster, RAI, to limit the use of slow-motion replays in their Sunday night shows. In theory, the idea is to curtail the number of arguments provoked by controversial incidents. In practice, they will continue, replay or no replay.

Another novelty is the arrival of a synthetic pitch at the top level of Italian football. Novara, the little team from Piedmont promoted to Serie B, plan to use an artificial surface that, according to manufacturers Italgreen, will prompt a 30 per cent reduction in injuries. Novara coach Attilio Tesser says his players will have to get used to an entirely new reality with everything being different – from the way the ball bounces to the way they must run.

Given the poor quality of many Serie A pitches in recent seasons, clubs will watch Novara's experiment with more than a passing interest. ●

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Standing no nonsense...Prandelli casts a watchful eye over his squad

All change

As usual, the start of the new apertura campaign was preceded by plenty of activity in the transfer market

ARGENTINA

ERIC WEIL in Buenos Aires

ONCE AGAIN the Argentinian close season produced copious team changes, with the top flight's 20 sides signing 171 players between them, and either transferring or releasing a further 219. While the transfer register is now closed locally, players can still be sold abroad.

Every year clubs seem to get rid of more players than they sign, but the squads of most clubs are still far too large, which is one cause for their continual debts. And the numerous team changes – including coaches – after every tournament are the main reason why Argentinian clubs are no longer so prominent internationally, even on their own continent.

Local newspapers speculate that over £30million changed hands – not huge by European standards, but a lot for Argentina – yet it is probably even more as most of the player movements were loan deals and many of the fees were not published.

All eyes are again on Boca Juniors and River Plate, still the country's most popular clubs but who have won only one title each in the last eight league campaigns. In last season's clausura they finished a poor 16th and 13th respectively.

The close season's main talking point was whether Boca could retain Juan Roman Riquelme without whom they hardly ever won last season. New coach Claudio Borghi insisted on keeping him and the 31-year-old midfielder drove a hard bargain before finally getting a four-year, £3m contract – longer and more costly than that of any other player in the country. The expense only increased existing rifts among club directors and many have become fed up with the player.

Boca Juniors also paid Villarreal £1.2m for a 50 per cent share of striker Damian Escudero's contract after he did not quite live up to his billing as "the new Messi" in Spain. Boca may appear to have strengthened their team with another five signings, including international defender Clemente Rodriguez from Estudiantes, but they still failed to win either of their first two games of the season.

Racing certainty...Moreno (centre) was the league's biggest pre-season purchase

> "Boca Juniors and River Plate have won only one title each in the last eight league campaigns"

River Plate also look stronger, despite their serious cash problems, with the return of former international goalkeeper Juan Pablo Carrizo on loan from Lazio, and striker Mariano Pavone, on loan from Betis, among nine signings. River start the season in the relegation zone after recent poor campaigns, but coach Angel Cappa says: "Although it worries us a bit, we are no way thinking of relegation. Our objective is to fight for the title."

That may be wishful thinking, but both Boca and River have the advantage of being able to concentrate on the league, not having qualified for this year's Sudamericana Cup.

Possible title challengers

Fourth last time out, Independiente were the best placed of the so-called "big six" and could challenge again. Among their seven new signings is striker German Pacheco, on loan from Atletico Madrid. Racing Club had the most expensive signing, paying £2.9m for 75 per cent of Atletico Nacional and Colombia midfielder Giovanni Moreno's contract. But despite several poor recent seasons in which they only just escaped relegation, they have made no other signings of note.

San Lorenzo, another of the "big six", were only 15th last term after an erratic season. Their key summer signing, coach Ramon Diaz, took them to the 2007 clausura title, but with the club now almost bankrupt, there have been no significant new player arrivals and he may not be able to improve the club's fortunes.

Last season's clausura champions, Argentinos Juniors, suffered the fate of most title winners, notably the smaller clubs, who cannot retain their players. Not only did coach Borghi leave for Boca, but he took their best defender, Matias Caruzzo, too. The club were also unable to pay the £1.9m required to buy on-loan striker Ismael Sosa and he has since moved to Europe to join Turkish club Gaziantepspor.

Last year's Libertadores Cup winners Estudiantes were one of the best teams last season, but they struggled with trying to be successful domestically as well as in continental competition, and look a weaker side this term. Apart from Rodriguez joining Boca, they also sold striker Mauro Boselli and defender Marcos Angeleri to English clubs Wigan Athletic and Sunderland respectively, while Jose Sosa returned to Bayern Munich after his loan spell finished.

Banfield, who won the apertura, lost 14 players, including Colombian midfielder James Rodriguez who joined Porto for £3m. Cash-strapped Huracan released and transferred no less than 27 players – many of whom were on loan – and failed to make any outstanding signings. Lanus, who played good football and finishing seventh in the clausura, lost only one first-team regular – midfielder Matias Fritzler joining Spanish side Hercules on loan – and their young team could do well again.

The promoted trio of All Boys, Olimpo and Quilmes will probably struggle. Promotion winners don't tend to rely on the same team that took them up, but wholesale changes rarely bring success either. This season, Quilmes have signed 22 new players, while All Boys brought in 14. ●

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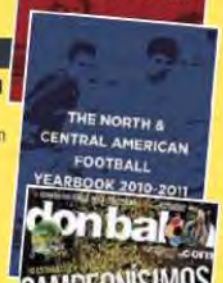

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Worlds collide

Barcelona's standing in the Far East took a battering after a difficult pre-season friendly

SOUTH KOREA

BRYAN KAY in Seoul

BARCELONA HAVE a reputation for class, on and off the field. Players such as Lionel Messi, Dani Alves and Xavi take care of the club's business on the pitch, oozing quality as they strut their stuff, often with a near seamlessness; off it, Barca have shown a real dedication to caring causes that culminated in the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) becoming their first-ever shirt sponsor.

But the club's early August Asian mini-tour saw an apparently different side of the Catalans emerge – at least according to football fans in their first port of call, South Korea. "Arrogant", "rude" and "disappointing" were just some of the verbal volleys launched at the weary Spanish giants by the local press as they departed the east Asian country following a game against an all-star XI from the K-League, South Korea's premier domestic division.

It was a sorry end to what was supposedly a public relations exercise – Barca had hoped to boost their global marketing efforts and win over the hearts and minds of new fans. South Korea is now a major football market – the domestic set-up exports more and more international-calibre players to the top leagues of England, France, Germany and Russia. Though some signings may in part have been driven by commercial interests, a captive audience is believed to await, while the standard of player is improving.

Manchester United – who have South Korea's national captain and arguably the country's finest player, Park Ji-sung, in their ranks – have visited twice in recent years and been welcomed with gusto. Fulham, when sponsored by South Korean company LG, visited in 2008 and played two matches, while Tottenham Hotspur took part in and won the 2005 Peace Cup.

The genuine love for England's Premier League goes beyond national pride in Park, with games screened live every weekend. The midfielder himself is viewed as a national hero and United now have a range of commercial endeavours in Seoul, with the Red Devils' home shirt not an uncommon sight on the streets of the capital. Scotland's Celtic have also jumped on the bandwagon with the capture of two local internationals, Ki Sung-yong and Cha Du-ri, and their shirts also populate local sports stores.

Barcelona were keen to tap into this too, but the tour has proved damaging. For the most part, the chorus of jibes to which they were subjected were out of keeping with the club's international image. Deeply rooted in its self-coined *mes que un club* (more than a club) trademark, the Spanish title-holders have been feted as much for their open democracy and dedication to philanthropy as their on-field prowess.

The club left Seoul for Beijing, the second and final tour stop, hoping to move on in more ways than one. Long term, the trip could prove debilitating as Barca aim to break the dominance of Manchester United – and, to a lesser extent, other Premier League clubs – in this part of the Asian continent and help assuage their spiralling debt.

> "The furore started when it emerged that Barca would travel without all of their star-studded first-team squad"

Messi controversy

The furore in South Korea started when it emerged that Barca would travel without all of their star-studded first-team squad. The club's nine Spain internationals, part of the victorious World Cup squad, were to rest at home. Then Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola revealed that Messi, the team's most recognisable icon, would not feature in the centrepiece event of the excursion: the game against the all-stars.

Both the organisers and Barca were thrust into the firing line. The agency who had set up the friendly convened a hasty press conference and officials insisted Messi was contractually obliged to take some part. Before long, it was confirmed that the Catalans had backtracked and their Argentinian superstar would play some part.

In the event, a largely youthful Barcelona outfit took to the field, Messi made a 17-minute cameo and scored in a 5-2 win. The damage was done, though, with the Seoul World Cup Stadium venue only half full – a mirror of how most K-League games turn out, with the exception of a clash between the country's big two clubs, Seoul and Suwon Bluewings.

Critics, though, went into overdrive. One commentator, referring to a press conference held shortly after Barca arrived in the country – during which both Messi and Dani Alves looked tired and apparently disinterested – blasted: "Nobody expects Barcelona players, who battle for league, Champions League and world titles, to see a trip to East Asia as a highlight. But if they are happy to receive €2.3million and be treated very well for what is, after all, an opportunity for self-promotion, a semblance of enthusiasm is needed."

The jibes became more cutting – the *Dong-a Ilbo* newspaper referred to "the team's blatant disregard for its Korean fans", adding that the Spaniards' "rudeness" had threatened to render the game meaningless. The *Korea Times* called Barca "arrogant" and questioned the club's decision to wear their new green change kit, rather than the famous red-and-blue stripes.

Barcelona appeared unperturbed. At a Beijing news conference, Messi played things down, telling reporters: "For me, there is no controversy."

How much of the affair was down to culture, through the Korean idea of "losing face" and the episode then being interpreted as an insult, remains debatable. Guardiola, perhaps so as not to repeat the Korea experience in China, told the Beijing conference that Messi would play a sizable chunk of the game against Beijing Guoan: he did, playing a half in a 3-0 win.

The dispute in Seoul aside, if the Catalans of Barcelona and the South Koreans share anything in common, it is a nationalistic zeal and a passion for football. But the laid-back attitude of the former and the frenetic nature of the latter showed them to be worlds apart. Barca will hope the episode doesn't cost them much more than the €300,000 they were fined in contractual penalties triggered by the absence of so many of their stars. ●

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Green for go...Messi eventually received the go-ahead for a brief cameo against the K-League all-stars

Local heroes

In a positive move, the top French clubs have traded domestic talent in this summer's transfer market

FRANCE

HOWARD JOHNSON in Paris

FRENCH FOOTBALL fans are used to seeing their hottest domestic properties leave for Europe's elite outfits, so the news that Ligue 1's biggest star, midfielder Yoann Gourcuff, had opted to quit Bordeaux in favour of Lyon was greeted with a big thumbs up from supporters everywhere – except those of the club he'd walked out on, of course.

The 24-year-old exercised a clause in his contract that became operational on July 31, allowing him to leave the west-coast outfit, and signed a contract with last season's Champions League semi-finalists.

Gourcuff's timing in announcing his wish to leave did not please Jean Tigana, the new Bordeaux boss who has replaced recently installed national coach Laurent Blanc. The player didn't feature in Bordeaux's starting line-up for the visit to Paris Saint-Germain on August 22, with an irritated Tigana explaining he couldn't play someone who'd asked to leave the club the day before the match. "Surely he could have asked for a meeting after the game," moaned Tigana.

Ironically, Bordeaux won 2-1 to secure their first points of the season, suggesting they're better off without Gourcuff. The reality is that they're not, of course, and Lyon have been quick to trumpet their £20million signing as the player they were most desperate to capture. This could be marketing speak, but there's no doubt coach Claude Puel has snagged himself a top-quality performer.

Gourcuff still has plenty to prove, however. He failed to set the world alight at the World Cup in a dismal France team, was part of a Bordeaux unit that slumped horribly at the business end of last season, and has never fully displayed his undoubted talent on the Champions League stage. Nevertheless, Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas has been quick to talk up the arrival of the 22-times capped international, calling the signing "something you only pull off once during your time in charge".

Welcome...new Lyon signing Gourcuff is paraded at the Stade de Gerland

> **"Something you only pull off once during your time in charge"**
>
> *Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas on signing Gourcuff*

Gourcuff flew from Bordeaux to Lyon by private jet on August 24 and signed for the club the following day. On board the jet he gave an interview to OL's own TV station, saying that his friendship with a number of the Lyon players, notably keeper Hugo Lloris, played a part in his decision to sign for the club. "It's a new experience and a new challenge, but I'm hugely motivated," explained Gourcuff. "I'm joining a club with ambition."

Win-win situation

There's no doubt that the signing of Gourcuff will strengthen Lyon's bid to get their hands on the French title after missing out in the last two seasons, while at the same time weakening the prospects of one of their title rivals. It's a win-win situation for Puel's side, especially since Aulas claims that the Lyon players themselves were pushing for Gourcuff to be brought on board.

It remains to be seen, though, whether Gourcuff is the missing piece of the puzzle that will allow Lyon to recapture their title as top dogs of France. Having already brought in striker Jimmy Briand from Rennes it looks like the club have made two top signings. But, then again, so have current champions Marseille, perhaps their biggest title rivals, who have captured strikers Andre-Pierre Gignac from Toulouse and Loic Remy from Nice. Remy finally got the green light to put on the sky-blue-and-white shirt after a medical had highlighted a heart problem that at one point threatened to scupper the deal.

With two big-name arrivals – interestingly both from French clubs just like the Lyon signings – Marseille have added muscle for what looks like being a fascinating domestic battle at the top end of Ligue 1. ●

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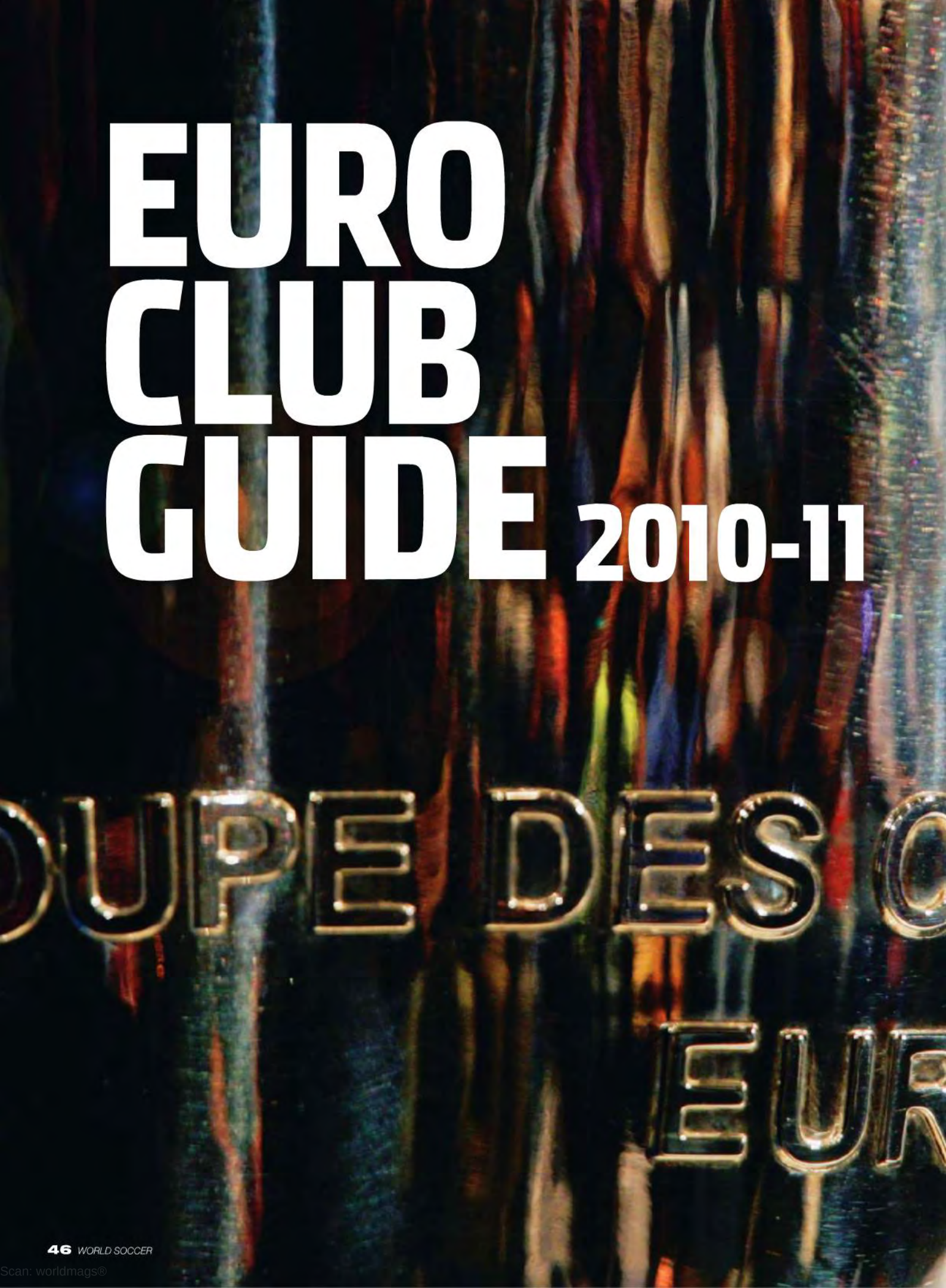

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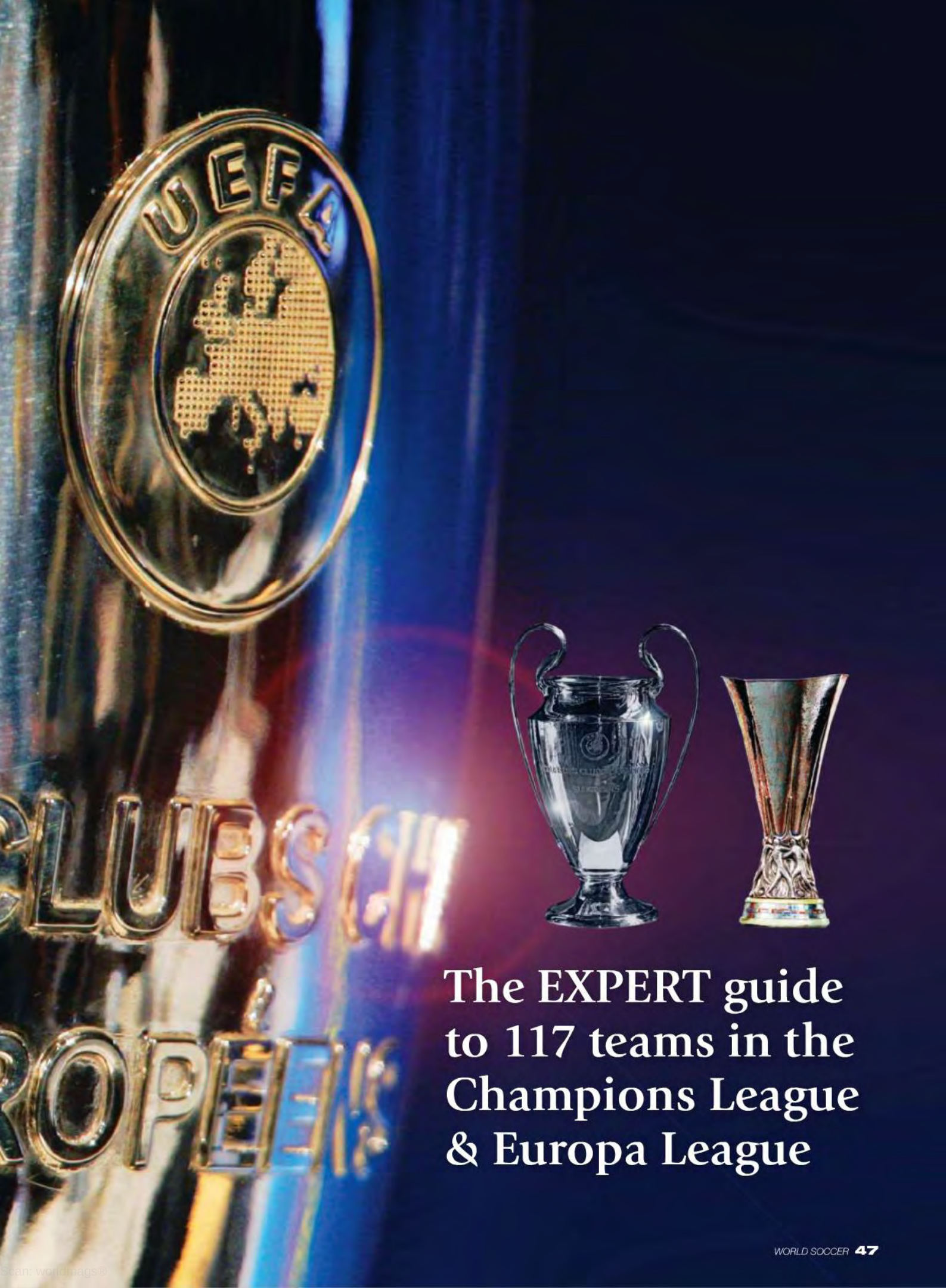

The EXPERT guide to 117 teams in the Champions League & Europa League

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AJAX (HOL)

Money matters

Qualification for this season's group stage was simply a must for the financially stricken Amsterdam club

Late return...Stekelenburg

THE best defence, the most prolific attack, the Eredivisie's top scorer and a run of 14 consecutive wins weren't enough for Ajax to grab the title and an automatic birth in this season's Champions League.

The Amsterdammers therefore had to play in the qualifying rounds – something that has tripped them up several times in the past. Ajax can't afford to fail this time as last year's financial deficit of £17million can only be ironed out by reaching the group phase of Europe's most prestigious tournament.

Martin Jol's task wasn't made any easier by the late return of Maarten Stekelenburg, Gregory Van der Wiel, Demy De Zeeuw, Nicolas Lodeiro and Luis Suarez from the World Cup. With the club's future at stake they were forced to play when rest would have been better.

With Marko Pantelic and Dennis Rommedahl having left during the summer, Jol feels his squad isn't as strong as last term and he threatened to take the manager's job at Fulham before winning an internal feud with the board and bringing in reinforcements such as AZ striker Mounir El Hamdaoui.

Ajax struggled in their first qualifier, against PAOK, drawing 1-1 and 3-3 before going through on away goals. Failure to progress further again would have been a big setback – a hammer blow that could be felt for the entire season.

THE COACH

MARTIN JOL (SINCE MAY 2009)
Former Tottenham Hotspur and Hamburg boss has restored order in Amsterdam by keeping faith in his players. A great tactician.

KEY PLAYER

LUIS SUAREZ
Club skipper who is the heart and soul of the team. Ajax can't do without him or his goals.

LOOKING TO ADVANCE

Jol will play El Hamdaoui as a central striker with the lively Suarez coming in from the right flank. De Zeeuw will be the midfield anchor, while the pacy Siem De Jong is developing just behind the strikers. The Belgian pairing of Toby Alderweireld and Ian Vertonghen provide the cover at the back.

ANDERLECHT (BLG)

Retracing past glories

Their greatest European nights may be behind them, but the Belgian champions have much to look forward to

Summer signing...Chavarria

LES MAUVES have not reached the last 16 of the Champions League since 2000-01 and – sad to say for a club that was a real force in the 1970s and 80s, winning the Cup-winners Cup in 1976 and 1978, and the 1983 UEFA Cup – it is hard to see a return to those glory days.

An annual budget of £25million is petty cash by San Siro, Bernabeu and Old Trafford standards, and Anderlecht's cloth has to be cut accordingly – resulting in a squad that lacks depth and a back line with a limited attention span.

Not that all is ominous at the Parc Astrid. Argentinian midfielder Lucas Biglia – who dislocated a shoulder in pre-season but is expected to make a speedy recovery – is an exceptional central regulator for the Belgian champions, while the mercurial Morocco creator and finisher Mbark Boussoufa has opted to stay on and, to the delight of coach Ariel Jacobs, a host of young guns are making their presence felt – not least Senegalese midfielder Cheikhou Kouyate, right-winger Jonathan Legear and teenage striker Romelu Lukaku.

The days of 30 years ago, when Anderlecht could draw top-class talent from Holland and Scandinavia, are history and general manager Herman Van Holsbeeck has no room for error. His two main summer signings were Argentinian striker Pablo Chavarria from Belgrano and USA attacking midfielder Sacha Kljestan from Chivas USA. Out went abrasive defender Jelle Van Damme, sold to Premier League side Wolverhampton Wanderers.

THE COACH

ARIEL JACOBS (SINCE NOVEMBER 2007)
The former Molenbeek and La Louviere boss, and one-time Anderlecht assistant, is often slated for his uptight personality. But even he was smiling widely after steering the Brussels club to a thoroughly deserved league crown in May.

KEY PLAYER

ROMELU LUKAKU
This 17-year-old, Antwerp-born striker of Congolese descent finished top scorer in the league last term with 15 goals.

WELL STRUCTURED YET FLEXIBLE

Jacobs is deemed too negative by some, but he merits praise for his tactical flexibility and – whether using 4-4-2, 4-3-3 or 4-2-3-1 – the Belgian champions look well ordered. Their aim is to get Biglia and Boussoufa on the ball, while the right-flank tandem of Guillaume Gillet and Legear is a decent attacking avenue.

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ARSENAL (ENG)

Young Guns

Once again the Gunners will rely on youth to see them through on Europe's biggest stage

New international...Wilshere

EVEN though the Arsenal board will not admit it publicly, the cost of the 2006 move to the Emirates Stadium has continued to restrict the club's transfer activity. Yet manager Arsene Wenger's ability to blood young talent, combined with his knack of selling players at the top of their value, has helped Arsenal to see off challenges from the likes of Manchester City so far.

This summer, the Gunners staved off a determined bid from Barcelona to sign Cesc Fabregas. With the Catalan midfielder staying for at least one more season, Arsenal can entertain serious ambitions in Europe.

All eyes will be on new England international Jack Wilshere as a future successor to Fabregas and Wenger is likely to use the Champions League group stage to introduce further young talent, following on from the likes of Kieran Gibbs and Tom Cruise last season.

With the return of Robin Van Persie from injury and the signing of Morocco's Marouane Chamakh from Bordeaux, Wenger has plenty of attacking alternatives. However, his options in defence are more limited, with William Gallas, Mikael Silvestre and Sol Campbell all having been released and only new boy Laurent Koscielny of Lorient arriving.

The biggest concern of all is the goalkeeper situation. Wenger remains unconvinced by Manuel Almunia and is in need of a dependable first choice.

THE COACH

ARSENE WENGER (SINCE OCTOBER 1996)

The erudite Frenchman has committed his future to Arsenal for a further three years and has admitted that he expects to stay with the club until he retires.

KEY PLAYER

CESC FABREGAS

The Barcelona-born midfielder remains club captain despite his clear desire to sign for Barca, prompting fears that he may not be as committed on the pitch this season.

AN EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES

The arrival of Chamakh means Wenger could use a conventional target man, but he may stick with Van Persie as a lone striker, with Fabregas and Andrei Arshavin floating behind. That would leave Chamakh and Nicklas Bendtner on the bench, with midfielders Abou Diaby, Theo Walcott, Denilson, Wilshere and Tomas Rosicky.

AUXERRE (FRA)

Big step up

Limited ambition and resources may have a telling effect on experienced Fernandez's team

Great thinker...Fernandez

AUXERRE'S triumph in making it to the Champions League play-offs after finishing third in Ligue 1 last season is just reward for the patient, persistent and resolutely low-key management style of coach Jean Fernandez.

The 55-year-old started his managerial career at Caen in 1985 and later worked in Saudi Arabia and Tunisia before arriving at Auxerre via the pressure-cooker atmosphere of Marseille, where he looked ill at ease. More relaxed in the Bourgogne area of northern France, Fernandez began a gradual process of progression at Auxerre and, carrying out his work with only the most meagre of resources, it finally paid off last term.

How seriously Auxerre will take the Champions League is difficult to predict. Fernandez has been talking about how ensuring his team stays in the French top flight is his priority. While there may well be some kidology going on, it is true to say that there's very little depth in his squad and little sign of irresponsible spending in a quest to push on.

The team lost influential Romania striker Daniel Niculae to Monaco in the close season, but have so far managed to hang on to their talismanic Polish forward Ireneusz Jelen, while recruiting former Liverpool striker Anthony Le Tallec from Le Mans. This isn't a team that will have Europe's elite quaking in their boots, but the fact that Auxerre are in such exalted company at all is a tribute to a job well done by everyone at the club.

THE COACH

JEAN FERNANDEZ (SINCE JUNE 2006)

Known as one of the game's great thinkers, he will be acutely aware of the need to balance the extra demands of a European campaign with the limitations of a small and relatively inexperienced squad.

KEY PLAYER

IRENEUSZ JELEN

The club's top scorer last term with 14 league goals. Much rests on the Poland international, but his persistent back problems remain a concern.

TRIED AND TESTED FORMATION

Fernandez likes to stick with a tried-and-trusted 4-2-3-1 line-up. With just the one change from last season – Le Tallec replacing Niculae – Auxerre will rely on a tight-knit group in which everyone knows their role and everything passes through the educated feet of skipper Benoit Pedretti in midfield.

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BARCELONA (SPA)

A rich seam of talent

Despite concerns over their financial predicament, Barca more than hold their own where it matters

Talented...Xavi (left) and Villa

BARCA kicked off their season with a 4-0 second-leg thrashing of Sevilla in the Spanish Super Cup as Lionel Messi put Argentina's ultimately disappointing World Cup campaign behind him with a hat-trick and overshadowed new signing David Villa.

Business as usual on the pitch, then. But off it tensions are simmering below the surface. New president Sandro Rosell claimed his predecessor, Joan Laporta, had mishandled the club's financial affairs, forcing him to take out a loan to fund player wages.

There may have been an element of political bluff to Rosell's claims – after all, he can now take the credit for solving a problem that he has highlighted – but Barcelona's influence in the transfer market may not be as strong as it once was and may be a factor in coach Pep Guardiola's reluctance to commit to a long-term contract.

This summer, there was no sign of Cesc Fabregas – the man Laporta was desperate to sign and confident of catching – but Barca did get Villa, so goals are guaranteed.

Still, questions will be asked of the fitness and hunger of Xavi and Andres Iniesta – players who, after Spain's World Cup success, have literally won it all at club and international level.

As the closure of the transfer window approached, Barca were pursuing a deal with Liverpool for Javier Mascherano, while Zlatan Ibrahimovic appeared to be on his way out of the club.

THE COACH

PEP GUARDIOLA (SINCE JULY 2008)
At Barcelona as man and boy, a stalwart of Cruyff's "Dream Team" and now an impressive trophy-winning coach. But after so much success, so quickly, how can he keep the motivation?

KEY PLAYER

LIONEL MESSI
A big season after Argentina's disappointing World Cup. Early signs are that at Barca, with the team set up to support him, he will be back to his best.

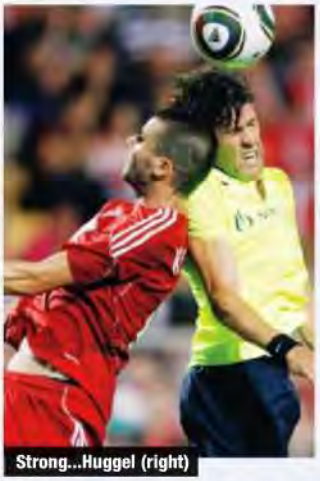
UNCHANGING STYLE

Barca rarely deviate **from the 4-3-3** favoured by Guardiola **and other coaches** down the years. **This season, Adriano** could fill the problem **left-back** position, while Sergio **Busquets** is a likely midfield **pivot. Bojan** and Jonathan Dos **Santos are** attacking alternatives.

BASLE (SWI)

Swiss success

Experienced campaigners will know exactly what to expect when it comes to the crunch


Strong...Huggel (right)

BIDDING to reach the Champions League group stage for a third time, Basle have been Switzerland's most successful team in the last few years, winning the league five times since 2002 – when they ended a 22-year drought – and emphasising their superiority by completing the double last season.

They first took part in the Champions League group stage in 2002-03, when they surpassed all expectations by reaching the round of 16. They were back again for another go in 2008-09, but this time they were thrashed 5-0 at home by a rampant Barcelona, though they restored some pride with a 1-1 draw at Camp Nou.

Having played in Europe every season since 1999, Basle are more than familiar with the tensions surrounding the qualifying rounds. Last year, they reached the group stage of the Europa League and were poised to clinch a place in the knockout stages until they lost their final game, 3-2 at home to eventual runners-up Fulham, on a snowy night at the St Jakob-Park.

The squad features a mixture of young and experienced Switzerland internationals, including the promising Xherdan Shaqiri, the outgoing Alex Frei and the already retired Benjamin Huggel, plus Ghana's Samuel Inkoom and Australia's Scott Chipperfield. They also have a trio of Argentinians in goalkeeper Franco Costanzo, defender David Abraham and Federico Almerares – though former Under-21 Costanzo is probably the only one who would be recognised in Buenos Aires.

THE COACH

THORSTEN FINK (SINCE JUNE 2009)
Former Bayern Munich player who won the double in his first season after replacing Christian Gross. Previously at German second division side Ingolstadt.

KEY PLAYER

BENJAMIN HUGGEL
The defensive midfielder has spent all but three seasons of his career at the club since 1998. Won his fifth Swiss league title with Basle last season and was a runner-up in the Bundesliga with Eintracht Frankfurt in 2006.

PLENTY OF WIDTH

Basle nearly always play in an attacking 4-4-2 formation, with Shaqiri and Valentin Stocker giving the side plenty of width. The full-backs Inkoom and Behrang Safari also like to get forward. Abraham commands the defence.

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BAYERN MUNICH (GER)

Coming of age

The national team's youthful exploits in South Africa could inspire last season's runners-up

Confidence...Muller

WITH so many of his World Cup stars reporting late for pre-season training, Bayern coach Louis Van Gaal feels it will be difficult, if not impossible, to prepare properly for the 2010-11 campaign, making no secret of his fear of a slow start.

But he need not worry unduly. As his side proved in claiming Champions League silver in May, they boast very nearly all the ingredients for success in this competition: genuine match winners, a slick passing game, counter-attacking menace, togetherness and a steely character.

In theory, Bayern should prove to be an even stronger unit this time round. After bedding in his complicated playing system during his first 12 months in charge, Van Gaal now only has to concern himself with the fine tuning, while several of his players – and most notably Thomas Muller and Bastian Schweinsteiger – will be oozing with confidence following their exploits in South Africa.

Two problem areas have to be resolved though: a tendency for lapses in concentration in central defence and the thorny issue of French creator Franck Ribery, whose career has nose-dived in the past 12 months thanks to repeated injuries, loss of form and off-the-field distractions.

THE COACH

LOUIS VAN GAAL (SINCE JULY 2009)

No-nonsense veteran Dutch boss who had a nightmarish first three months at Bayern and came close to the sack. In a spectacular turnaround, he led them to a domestic double and the Champions League Final.

KEY PLAYER

BASTIAN SCHWEINSTEIGER

Van Gaal's decision to switch him to a central playmaking role was inspired. World class and always in control.

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Whether he deploys a 4-3-3, 4-4-2 or current favourite 4-2-3-1, the heart of the Van Gaal philosophy is the concept that the game is a well-structured, collective endeavour. He aims to win with attacking style and in his line-ups each position comes with its own set of basic tasks that every player has to respect.

BENFICA (POR)

Knockout target

The loss of two star players presents a difficult challenge that the Eagles of Lisbon may struggle to overcome

Impressive...Cardozo

THE seven-time European Cup finalists have much pedigree in the continent's top club competition and this season the Eagles of Lisbon would love to reach the knockout stages of the Champions League for the first time since 2006.

Benfica played some of the best club football in Europe last term, managing a whopping 24 wins in 30 league games while also reaching the quarter-finals of the Europa League. This year, after losing two of their best players, the Reds will find it challenging to achieve success at home and abroad.

The loss of Angel Di Maria to Real Madrid and Ramires to Chelsea is a blow. Both ever present last season, it is no coincidence they ended up at two of the continent's top clubs this summer. Nicolas Gaitan of Boca Juniors and Arsenal de Sarandi's Franco Jara, the Argentinian youngsters brought in to replace them, won't make an immediate impact.

Benfica's Champions League fortunes will centre on David Luiz, Pablo Aimar and Oscar Cardozo. The South Americans form the spine of a side that can still compete with the best – if this trio deliver. Luiz is equally effective tackling as he is creating attacking moves from defence and Aimar can still change a game with a deft touch or deadly pass, while Cardozo's goalscoring record for the Eagles is impressive – in all competitions the Paraguayan hit the back of the net 38 times last season.

THE COACH

JORGE JESUS (SINCE JUNE 2009)

Energetic and inspirational, he guided the Lisbon giants to only their second title in the last 15 years last term. Likes to play attacking football and is a strict disciplinarian, always demanding the best from his players.

KEY PLAYER

DAVID LUIZ

Calm and composed central defender who has developed into a leader on the pitch and is rated at £27million by the Lisbon side.

FEWER DIAMOND DISPLAYS

Last season Jesus relied on a 4-4-2 diamond formation, but after losing Ramires and Di Maria, he has tried 4-3-3. Javi Garcia is responsible for most of the defensive work in midfield, with Aimar and Carlos Martins alternating as playmaker. Javier Saviola will be forced out wide, occasionally helping Cardozo in the middle.

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BRAGA (POR)

Amazing progress

Shock Portuguese qualifiers hope to spring further surprises on the European stage

Effective...Moises

ONE of the biggest surprise packages in European football last season, Braga came close to winning the Portuguese title for the first time in the club's history.

"The Arsenal", as they are known, owed much of their success to a rock-solid defence which conceded a miserly 20 goals in 30 games. However, a lot of the credit also has to go to young coach Domingos Paciencia.

A former Porto striker who won 35 caps for the national side, the 41-year-old drew on the winning mentality he developed as a player to convince his side they were worth more than the sum of their parts.

The problem for the new term, however, is that Braga have paid the price of their success. Tenacious goalkeeper Eduardo left for greener, richer pastures in Italy with Genoa, left-back Evaldo joined Sporting Lisbon and inspirational midfielder Hugo Viana, on loan from Valencia last season, returned to Spain.

There is, of course, still a good measure of talent left at the club from northern Portugal and they comfortably disposed of Celtic at the third qualifying stage. Brazilian defender Moises – known as "The Sheriff" – was effective in shackling the Scottish club's forwards. However, Braga will still struggle to make it past the group stages of European competition this season.

THE COACH

DOMINGOS PACIENCIA (SINCE JUNE 2009)

A firm believer in counter-attacking football, relying on his side's ability to defend deep and unleash fast and ferocious moves in response.

KEY PLAYER

ALAN

This speedy, skilful winger led the way with his many assists last season and will once again be crucial to Braga's attacking play.

ATTACKING VERSATILITY

Paciencia likes a **versatile 4-3-3 formation.** Uruguayan midfielder **Luis Aguiar aims** to wreak havoc with **his box-to-box** runs. Brazilian flanker **Alan should** continue his stellar **wing play, and** both Paulo Cesar **and Matheus** have proven time **and again** that their mobility **and** killer instinct can **turn** a game on its head.

BURSASPOR (TUR)

Snap decisions

The "Green Crocodiles" have been snapping up foreign talents for their group-stage campaign

Making history...Saglam

NEVER having previously finished in the top three, Bursaspor made history last term by becoming only the second club – after Trabzonspor – from outside Istanbul to win the Turkish Super Lig. As a result, the "Green Crocodiles" are the country's only representatives in this season's Champions League group stage – something that is a source of great pride for the whole city.

The board and supporters would have been happy just to qualify for Europe at the start of last term – and president Ibrahim Yazici had no apparent worries in offering coach Ertugrul Saglam a £1million bonus should he win the title.

Yazici has not only paid up but he has also funded the arrival of several experienced foreign players – such as Serbia defender Milan Stepanov and the Argentinian duo, midfielder Federico Insua and striker Leonel Nunez – to help boost the squad's capabilities.

Renowned as a team that always tries to play positive, attacking football, the creativity of Sercan Yildirim will be vitally important in Europe. However, their best asset in Europe may well be their ability to both attack and defend as a team.

Of their European adventure, Saglam said: "We'll try not to let those who supported us down. The whole of Bursa has made history."

THE COACH

ERTUGRUL SAGLAM (SINCE JANUARY 2009)

Previously in charge of Besiktas, he oversaw their 8–0 defeat away to Liverpool in November 2007 – the joint-heaviest defeat in Champions League group history.

KEY PLAYER

SERCAN YILDIRIM

Only 20, he has decided to stay with Bursaspor for now despite offers from some of Turkey and Europe's biggest clubs. Quick and clever, he can shoot with either foot and is also good in the air.

DEFENSIVE UNITY AND WIDTH IN ATTACK

Will defend as a unit and then rely on getting the ball wide to Ozan Ipek on the left and Volkan Sen on the right, who will look to cut inside or provide decent service into the box. If goals are scarce, the Crocs could turn to goalkeeper Dimitar Ivankov, a renowned penalty taker who has more than 40 goals to his name.

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CFR CLUJ (ROM)

Group target

Past feats of Romanian rivals will drive last season's double winners on

Key influence...Cadu (left)

COACH Andrea Mandorlini has made it perfectly clear that his Champions League ambition for this season is to at least equal the eight points achieved by Unirea Urziceni in their group last year.

"We are in a good way and are already playing at 60 per cent of our ability," said the Italian after his side took four points from their first two games of the Romanian season.

With seven major titles in the last three seasons – adding the Super Cup in July to last season's double – CFR feel it is time they started to reproduce that sort of form abroad, with the club's main shareholder, Arpad Paszkany, stating: "It's time to overtake the borders."

With this in mind, Mandorlini was given a transfer kitty of around £10million to fund the arrival of players such as Sporting Braga midfielder Rafael Bastos, who arrived in July to join fellow Brazilians Hugo Alcantara, Edimar and Leo Veloso.

However, the Romanian champions will be without Argentinian midfielder Sixto Peralta, who left in the summer, and Burkina Faso striker Yssouf Kone, whose left-knee injury is set to keep him out of action until 2011.

Cluj's prospects will be enhanced if they can hold on to another Burkina Faso forward, Lacina Traore, who is attracting attention from several of Europe's bigger leagues. Portuguese centre-back Cadu remains a key influence at the heart of the defence.

THE COACH

ANDREA MANDORLINI (SINCE NOVEMBER 2009)
Former Atalanta, Bologna and Siena boss who, says Argentinian midfielder Juan Culio, is "very clever in his tactics, preparing the minor detail of every game".

KEY PLAYER

GABRIEL MURESAN
Romania international who is the midfield fulcrum, breaking up opposition moves and launching counter-attacks. Also chips in with goals from long distance.

STRENGTH AND STABILITY

Cluj generally adopt a 4-3-3 line-up. As you would expect from an Italian coach, Mandorlini's side is strong defensively. They rely on swift counter-attacks, using the speed of Traore and Culio, together with the aerial prowess of former Croatia centre-forward Sasa Bjelanovic, who arrived from Vicenza in June.

CHELSEA (ENG)

Roman's dream

Victory in the Champions League remains the No1 priority for the Blues' Russian owner

Raring to go...Essien

FOR all the celebrations over Chelsea's domestic double last season, the Champions League remains the prime target for owner Roman Abramovich. The Russian billionaire's long-term commitment to his London football "project" was questioned after the Blues' defeat on penalties to Manchester United in the 2008 Champions League Final in Moscow, but Ambramovich's enthusiasm has been reinvigorated by the manner of his team's revival under Carlo Ancelotti last season.

The Italian encouraged Chelsea to play with more panache than his predecessors, even if defeat to Jose Mourinho's Internazionale in the Champions League knockout phase was a painful reminder of the virtues of a more pragmatic approach.

Ancelotti did so without hefty reinforcements – and that trend continued this summer. With Fernando Torres staying at Liverpool and David Villa moving to Barcelona, two of the Blues' long-term targets were lost. Several big earners were cleared from the wage bill – Joe Cole, Deco, Michael Ballack, Juliano Belletti, Ricardo Carvalho – with only Yossi Benayoun and Ramires arriving.

Assuming the new mood of austerity is not broken by a flurry of late signings, Ancelotti is likely to blood more youngsters who have joined the club as a result of a controversial recruitment policy led by technical director Frank Arnesen.

Able to call upon Michael Essien and John Obi Mikel, back from injury and raring to go after missing the World Cup, Chelsea will be serious contenders again.

THE MAIN MEN

CARLO ANCELOTTI (SINCE MAY 2009)
The Italian, one of only a few to have won the European Cup as both player and coach, soon made his mark at Chelsea. His positive tactics have already resulted in a flurry of Premier League goals this season.

KEY PLAYER

DIDIER DROGBA
The Ivory Coast striker has admitted playing through the pain barrier in recent seasons, but his goals will be crucial.

FLEXIBLE ATTACKING OPTIONS

Ancelotti favours a 4-3-3 line-up with Nicolas Anelka and Florent Malouda either side of Drogba. That can easily shift to a 4-5-1, with Anelka replaced by another midfielder, or a 4-4-2 with Anelka pushed into a more central role alongside Drogba. New signing Ramires will be a strong contender in midfield.

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COPENHAGEN (DEN)

Travel sickness

Impressive at home, Denmark's domestic champions need to improve away from home if they are to make progress

Continuity...Solbakken

EASILY Denmark's strongest club side, Copenhagen have made a good start to the new domestic season and set their sights on making further progress in Europe after a thrilling 3-2 win over Belarus champions BATE Borisov saw them qualify for the play-off stage.

It is four years since they last reached the group stage – where they beat Manchester United – though they did progress through last season's Europa League group phase, before losing to Marseille.

Playing home matches at the country's national stadium gives them a raucous home crowd for big fixtures, which they exploit well. But the big problem for Copenhagen is that they don't tend to travel well and this is a fault they will have to cure if they want to jump to a new stage of development.

The current side is a mixture of nationalities, with local players often in the minority despite the presence of Denmark internationals such as veteran winger Jesper Gronkjaer and midfielders William Kvist and Hjalte Norregaard. The defence has a Swedish bias, and there are a couple of Brazilians too, with striker Cesar Santin starting this campaign in fine form.

Continuity under Norwegian coach Stale Solbakken has been a virtue – as is the return of Martin Bergvold on a free transfer from Livorno, three-and-a-half years after the midfielder departed to join the Italian outfit.

THE COACH

STALE SOLBAKKEN (SINCE DECEMBER 2005)

The winner of three Superliga titles, he has agreed to become Norway's national coach in 2012.

KEY PLAYER

DAME N'DOYE

The athletic Senegalese striker joined Copenhagen from Crete in January last year and has been a regular goalscorer ever since.

MIDFIELD SUPREMACY CHALLENGED

Copenhagen play **a conservative but successful 4-4-2 system, with two strikers fed by a flying winger in Gronkjaer. This has proved a winning formula in the Superliga, but they could be outnumbered and outgunned in midfield in European competition.**

DYNAMO KYIV (UKR)

Keeping the faith

Despite finishing last season empty-handed, Dynamo's owner continues to have faith in his coach

Striker...Andriy Yarmolenko

UNDECIDED on whether to concentrate on reaching the Champions League knockout stage or defending their Ukrainian league title, Dynamo's season turned into a farce last term as they finished bottom of their European group and lost their domestic crown to rivals Shakhtar Donetsk.

Yet despite the rarity of a campaign without any silverware, owner Ihor Surkis surprisingly expressed his full confidence in Russian coach Valery Gazzaev.

"We did not play badly in the Champions League," says Surkis. "Don't forget that we were drawn in the group of death, against the then-reigning champions Barcelona and future winners Inter, plus Russian champions Rubin Kazan.

"Truly speaking, I was impressed by the resistance of our players in both games against Inter. We also had some chances against the mighty Barcelona too. Unfortunately, Lady Luck was completely against us last term.

"Due to these factors I decided to give Gazzaev one more chance to fulfil his sound promises."

Surkis backed up his words of support with money, financing the acquisitions of Macedonia defender Goran Popov from the Dutch side Heerenveen, Argentina playmaker Facundo Bertoglio from Colon and Brazilian striker Andre from Santos.

THE COACH

VALERY GAZZAEV (SINCE MAY 2009)

After signing a contract with Dynamo last summer, the Russian made loud declarations about wanting to win the Champions League during his three-year tenure. Another campaign of failing to deliver on such statements may be his last.

KEY PLAYER

ANDRIY SHEVCHENKO

Dynamo's prodigal son returned last autumn and soon became the team's leader, on and off the field. Is the skipper this term.

TACTICAL SWITCH BODES WELL

Gazzaev has learned lessons from previous failures and has reshuffled his tactical formation. Danilo Silva's introduction at right-back towards the end of last season saw Roman Eremenko go to a more familiar slot wide on the right and allowed Shevchenko to come in up front. Rather than 4-5-1, the coach now prefers 4-4-2.

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HAPOEL TEL AVIV (ISR)

Growing ambition

A good showing in last season's Europa League has raised hopes for this term's European campaign

Midfield magician...Vermuth

LAST season was one of across-the-board achievement for Hapoel. Not only did they come from behind to pip Maccabi Haifa to the domestic league – clinching the title courtesy of a stoppage-time winner on the final weekend of the campaign– the Reds also beat Bnei Yehuda to win the Israeli State Cup and excelled in the Europa League group phase, topping their pool with victories over Celtic, Rapid Wien and Hamburg.

Further proof of Hapoel's growing ambition can be seen in the actions of key players such as Brazilian centre-back Douglas Da Silva and midfield creator Gil Vermuth who were sufficiently convinced about the team's prospects to spurn job offers from France and Spain respectively.

Meanwhile, club owners Moni Harel and Eli Tabib have added substantially to the transfer budget, paving the way for an impressive array of new recruits, including the hard-working French midfielder Romain Rocchi (from Metz), South African central defender Bevan Fransman (Maccabi Netanya), clever ex-Maccabi Tel Aviv schemer Yossi Shivhon and much-travelled Israel striker Ben Sahar, who has arrived on a season-long loan from Espanyol.

The only worry leading up to the transfer window was whether Hapoel could hang on to Nigeria's World Cup goalkeeper Vincent

THE COACH

ELI GUTTMAN (SINCE 2007)
Once dubbed "The German" for his conservative tactics, hard taskmaster ways and almost total lack of emotion, he has now morphed into a communicative friend of the players and an advocate of attacking football.

KEY PLAYER

GIL VERMUTH
The midfield magician has been outstanding since returning to Hapoel two years ago following a stint in Belgium with Gent.

FEARLESS, FREE-FLOWING FOOTBALL

Hapoel are renowned for their free-flowing attacks and ability to dominate possession. Fear is not part of their make-up; even on European away days they will not sit back. All of the front five – most notably the pacy Itay Shechter – offer a goal threat. Much, though, depends on the form of midfield holder Avihai Yadin.

INTERNAZIONALE (ITA)

Can Rafa top Jose?

New boss Benitez has a tough act to follow with the reigning European champions

Star performer...Sneijder

INTER may have ended a 44-year wait for their third European Cup with victory over Bayern Munich in Madrid in May, but now they must try to emulate city rivals Milan who, in 1990, were the last club to retain Europe's top club prize.

New coach Rafa Benitez has replaced Jose Mourinho and he has the unenviable task of keeping Inter's success-hungry fans happy – and they may not be as forgiving as those at Liverpool, where a remarkable 2005 Champions League Final in Istanbul bought him goodwill and time.

Even with the departure of Mario Balotelli to Manchester City, Benitez can call on Italian football's strongest squad. Inter were linked with Diego Forlan and Javier Mascherano in the summer, but nothing materialised and dealing was restricted to shipping out Mourinho's fringe players, such as Ricardo Quaresma to Besiktas. Keeper Francesco Toldo retired, while Inter owner Massimo Moratti was adamant Brazil right-back Maicon would not be reunited with Mourinho in Madrid.

Another Brazilian, Mancini, who was not favoured by Mourinho, is back from a loan spell at Milan, while club captain Javier Zanetti, now 37, signed a new contract.

Zanetti's continued presence suggests further success is possible, especially if Diego Milito and Wesley Sneijder, carry on where they left off last term.

Benitez should find his tactical outlook well suited to Italian football. Whether he can pull it off on the European stage remains to be seen.

THE MAIN MEN

RAFA BENITEZ (SINCE JUNE 2010)
The Spaniard divides opinion: his supporters point to his successes with Valencia, while his detractors claim that he failed to deliver in his time at Liverpool.

KEY PLAYER

WESLEY SNEIJDER
Can he continue where he left off at the World Cup? A good September and October will see him confirmed as a contender for the end-of-year player awards.

PRACTICAL APPROACH TO SILVERWARE

As last season, Benitez will adopt the same pragmatic stance as Mourinho – forwards Samuel Eto'o and Goran Pandev will need to track back from their wide starting roles behind lone striker Milito. Zanetti may play as a central defensive midfielder. Sulley Muntari, Thiago Motta and David Suazo offer further options.

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LYON (FRA)

Home priorities

Former French champions may set sights on a return to domestic dominance rather than European exploits

Back in the ranks...Michel Bastos

AFTER raising many an eyebrow by making it all the way to the Champions League semi-finals last season, Lyon's limitations were cruelly exposed by Bayern Munich, who put Claude Puel's men to the sword with embarrassing ease.

Puel led the former top dogs of French football to second place in the domestic championship after a storming second half of the season, but they didn't quite have enough to nick the title from Marseille. A resolute realist, Puel says his aim for this season is to win back the league title that has eluded OL these past two seasons while claiming only that "we'll see where we can get to in the Champions League".

Puel was maybe trying to be realistic, although expectations have been raised by the record signing of Yoann Gourcuff from Bordeaux.

Lyon are a good side – a very good side on their day – but do they have enough consistency to trouble Europe's biggest noises on a regular basis? Argentina's Lisandro Lopez is as good a striker as his 15-goal haul last term suggests, while his new partner up front, Jimmy Briand, having earned himself a big reputation at Rennes, now needs to deliver on the big stage.

Lyon will also have Michel Bastos, so impressive for Brazil during the World Cup, back in the ranks, while his compatriot Cris has signed a contract extension.

Lyon have a settled unit, boosted by Gourcuff, that is well equipped for a title challenge. Europe may be a stretch, though...

THE COACH

CLAUDE PUEL (SINCE JULY 2008)
Showed he's coming good at Lyon when his team turned in an impressive second half of last season. Still searching for consistency, while being acutely aware that his team needs to add a touch of flair to their play. Expect a more offensive Lyon this time around.

KEY PLAYER

JIMMY BRIAND
The striker arrives from Rennes needing to confirm his talent now that he's at a big club.

MORE GEARED TO ATTACK

The likelihood is that Briand and Lisandro Lopez will form a striking partnership with Michel Bastos – who plays at left-back for Brazil – in an advanced role. This would see Lyon mutate from last season's 4-5-1 into a more attack-minded 4-3-3. Midfielder Toulalan will partner Cris in the middle of the defence.

MANCHESTER UNITED (ENG)

Making amends

After a disappointing World Cup with England, Wayne Rooney will be hoping to sparkle once again

United's talisman...Rooney

UNITED will again entertain serious ambitions to win a fourth European Cup, but the current side appears weaker than the team that triumphed in Moscow in 2008.

Last season, United did their upmost to exploit the talent of their best player, Wayne Rooney, even playing him against Bayern Munich when not fully fit. Defeat by Bayern in the quarter-finals was a big blow, especially after United had taken a 3-0 lead in the second leg at Old Trafford. The setback demonstrated the thin line between success and failure in the knockout stage.

This summer, transfer market activity was again limited, with Fulham defender Chris Smalling, Javier Hernandez of Guadalajara and the unknown Bebe the only arrivals.

Manager Alex Ferguson has yet to see much of the £80million that United banked from the 2009 sale of Cristiano Ronaldo to Real Madrid.

This summer, Ferguson risked incurring the wrath of United's increasing agitated fanbase when he defended the Glazer family and the debts that they have piled onto a previously profitable enterprise.

Victory over Chelsea in the Community Shield season opener suggests Ferguson's side will be a domestic force again this season. Injuries to key men – Rio Ferdinand, Anderson and the now marginal Owen Hargreaves – mean United will once more call on veterans Ryan Giggs and Paul Scholes.

But, as ever, so much rests on Rooney and his big-game prowess. More will be expected of him too, as his likely strike partner, Hernandez, has no European experience.

THE COACH

ALEX FERGUSON (SINCE NOVEMBER 1986)

United's most successful manager still covets more European success but the issue of his eventual retirement is looming larger every year.

KEY PLAYER

WAYNE ROONEY
United's attacking talisman managed 34 goals in 44 games for the Reds last season but began this campaign under pressure to perform for his club after a disappointing, injury-inhibiting World Cup.

FERGUSON'S UMPTEENTH EUROPEAN ASSAULT

Rooney has a floating role as a secondary striker. Hernandez is an exciting presence in attack. Dimitar Berbatov is another attacking option, with Darren Fletcher a more rugged option in midfield. Giggs is likely to start on the bench. John O'Shea and Smalling offer defensive options, as does Fabio.

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MARSEILLE (FRA)

OM's main man

A Champions League winner with Marseille as a player, coach Didier Deschamps hopes to work his magic again

Vision...Lucho Gonzales

HAVING won the French title for the first time in 18 years, Marseille are now looking to build on that and show Europe they're no pushovers on the big stage. But they will be doing well if they can get out of the group stage as, while they have a decent enough side, they don't as yet have enough pure class to shake up Europe's established order.

At the start of the season OM looked particularly light up front, especially after Mamadou Niang followed Fernando Morientes and Bakari Kone out of the Stade Velodrome and joined Fenerbahce. However, Deschamps improved his firepower in August with the signing of Nice striker Loic Remy for a fee in the region of £12.5million.

Elsewhere, much will rest on the shoulders of Argentina midfielder Lucho Gonzalez as he starts his second campaign in France. The former Porto man is a terrific passer of the ball and his vision unlocked many a defence last season, as his 11 assists prove.

Deschamps has already led a French side to the Champions League Final – he took Monaco there in 2004 – and that managerial experience will certainly benefit Marseille. If they can get hold of a midfielder enforcer – there's talk of Bordeaux's Alou Diarra heading south – then their squad will be much improved. Regardless of how the Champions League pans out, though, OM will surely be there or thereabouts in the domestic title race.

THE COACH

DIDIER DESCHAMPS (SINCE JULY 2009)
The wee man is a hero in Marseille after his achievements as player and coach. Should have enough nous to help OM punch above their weight in Europe.

KEY PLAYER

LUCHO GONZALEZ
Can unlock the tightest defences if he gets the ball. Possibly a little lightweight for the Champions League, so Marseille will need someone to act as his minder.

AN INJECTION OF ENERGY

Most likely to persist with last term's 4-3-3 and a triangular midfield: two attack-minded players supporting two men in the channels and a lone striker. Spanish prodigy Cesar Azpilicueta will give more energy down the right, while Ghana's Andre Ayew will be keen to do well on the left after an impressive World Cup.

MILAN (ITA)

Neighbour envy

Past Milan triumphs are currently in real danger of being overshadowed by Inter's dominance

Plenty to prove...Ronaldinho

COMPREHENSIVELY beaten by Manchester United in the first knockout round of last season's Champions League, it is hard to see Milan progressing any further in this campaign after they engaged in little transfer market activity.

Owner Silvio Berlusconi once funded lavish spending through his media and business empire, but the last European Cup success, over Liverpool in 2007, seems an age ago. As Italian prime minister, Berlusconi is loath to fritter away money on his former plaything with the country's economy in a bad state.

New coach Massimiliano Allegri, who replaced Leonardo at the end of last season, gained a reputation for attacking football at Cagliari. He is expected to carry on where the Brazilian left off, but faces the same problem as his predecessors, namely how to reinvigorate an ageing side on a limited budget.

The likes of Alessandro Nesta and Andrea Pirlo remain key figures on the playing side, while the Brazilian influence is still strong, with Ronaldinho and Alexandre Pato regular starters.

Milan were hoping to sell Holland striker Klaas-Jan Huntelaar to fund some more signings, while Kevin-Prince Boateng has joined on loan from Genoa. Other new arrivals include Colombian defender Mario Yepes from Chievo, Greek defender Sokratis Papastathopoulos from Genoa and goalkeeper Marco Amelia, also from Genoa.

Hardly the stuff to get Milan fans dreaming of domestic success, let alone in European competition.

THE MAIN MEN

MASSIMILIANO ALLEGRI (SINCE JUNE 2010)
The popular young coach was hired by the *Rossoneri* this summer after enjoying two impressive seasons at Cagliari.

KEY PLAYER

RONALDINHO
The Brazilian is the player who is most capable of raising Milan's game above the ordinary – and he still has plenty to prove after missing out on Brazil's World Cup squad.

ALLEGRI'S NEW AGE OF ATTACK

Ronaldinho pulls the strings behind Pato and Marco Borriello in a 4-3-1-2 formation in which Pirlo is still the crucial midfield pivot. New signing Papastathopoulos is likely to come in at right-back. Huntelaar, if he stays, will start on the bench, from where veteran Filippo Inzaghi still hopes to extend his European goal tally.

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PANATHINAIKOS (GRE)

French influence

Govou and Boumsong join forces with international team-mate Cisse for a big season in Athens

Top goalscorer...Cisse

TO mark the 40th anniversary of Panathinaikos' run to the Final of the 1970-71 European Cup, where they eventually lost 2-0 to Ajax at Wembley, the club's board, now led by former leftist-party leader Nikos Konstantopoulos, have dug deep to fund a spending spree.

Joining last season's top Greek league goalscorer Djibril Cisse are his France team-mates, defender Jean-Alain Boumsong and winger Sidney Govou, both from Lyon. They should give Pana the top-level European nous their squad lacks. The club have also retained Brazil's Gilberto Silva and Argentinian left-winger Sebastian Leto for at least another season.

"I am very optimistic," says striker Cisse. "We have a very good club and I am anxious for the season to begin. I have the feeling we will do well in the Champions League."

And according to veteran team skipper Giorgos Karagounis, this season's team is "complete in all positions" and "better than last season" – when Pana won the double for the first time in years.

Coach Nikos Nioplias sets out his side's agenda when he states: "Our aim is to win the Greek championship and the Greek Cup, and to achieve this we must score many goals and have a good attack.

"We did the same last year and will do the same this year. We have good players who can achieve much in attack.

"We proved last year we are the best team in Greece. We're capable of achieving a lot in Europe as well."

THE COACH

NIKOS NIOPLIAS (SINCE DECEMBER 2009)

The former Greece midfielder has been given another one-year contract to prove that guiding the team to the double last season, after a long drought, was not just luck but also managerial skill.

KEY PLAYER

SOTIRIS NINIS

Rated at £10million by his club and already a full international, the 20-year-old midfielder should get a lot of playing time this season and will be watched by many of Europe's top clubs.

NEWCOMERS TO MAKE AN IMPACT

In a likely 4-3-3 formation, the three France internationals – Boumsong, Govou and Cisse – are bound to feature strongly, with young Ninis prominent in midfield. With Brazil's Gilberto Silva dropping back into defence and the ever-improving Leto adding his magic touch up front, Pana should be confident of making an impact.

PARTIZAN BELGRADE (SER)

Poor track record

Partizan's recent form in Europe doesn't point towards a successful campaign this time out

Experienced...Sasa Ilic (left)

THE only Serbian club to have played in the Champions League group stage (back in 2003-04), Partizan reached this season's play-off round with ease, winning all four matches against Armenian champions Pyunik and HJK Helsinki of Finland without ever playing particularly well.

"My aim is that we play good football," said coach Aleksandar Stanojevic after the win in Helsinki.

"If we will play like this in the Champions League, or the Europa League, no matter who the opponent is, I would be very disappointed. Be sure that we won't play like this. We will play as I want, even if end up losing 5-2."

The present Partizan team is a blend of interesting youngsters – Marko Jovanovic, Radosav Petrovic, Nemanja Tomic – and experienced players – Mladen Krstajic, Sasa Ilic, Almami Moreira, Ivica Iliev, Cleo. They are favourites to win the Serbian championship again this season; success in Europe, however, may not come so easily.

In the past two seasons, Partizan have played 10 UEFA Cup and Europa League group games and suffered nine defeats. The only victory came in a meaningless dead rubber against Shakhtar Donetsk.

Realistically, there is little to suggest that things will be any different this time around.

THE COACH

ALEKSANDAR STANOJEVIC (SINCE APRIL 2010)

The youngest coach in the club's history at 36, he was previously in charge of Serbia's Under-19s and assisted national boss Miroslav Djukic.

KEY PLAYER

CLEO

The Brazilian striker arrived from Red Star in June 2009 after Partizan's arch-rivals couldn't afford to keep him. He scored five goals in the club's first four Champions League qualifiers this term.

COACH DEMANDS FLEXIBILITY AND GOOD FOOTBALL

Partizan play with a flexible 4-4-2, that often transforms into a 4-1-4-1, with Petrovic as the holding midfielder and Cleo the lone striker. With Iliev more of a left-winger than a striker, they still lack a forward to replace Lamine Diarra, who has been loaned to UAE club Al Shabab.

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RANGERS (SCO)

All to play for

The Scottish champions' hopes of an extended run in Europe will probably rest with the Europa League

Pivotal...Davis (right)

A SUMMER exodus – in which they lost six first-team squad members, including the SPL's all-time leading goalscorer Kris Boyd – has left the Scottish champions looking distinctly under-resourced for the demands of a European campaign.

Walter Smith has bought in strikers James Beattie and Nikica Jelavic, plus winger Vladimir Weiss on loan from Manchester City, against a backdrop of continuing financial worries. But whatever Rangers may lack with regard to their squad's strength in depth, they will more than make up for with a spirit that is as strong as any seen at Ibrox in recent years.

Defensive solidity is a hallmark of all Smith's sides, though it will be interesting to see how David Weir, now 40, copes at the heart of the defence when faced with top-class attackers in the Champions League.

Up front, Kenny Miller will be under increased pressure to score goals now that Boyd has gone, though Steven Naismith, who will operate from a withdrawn role on the flank, has the ability to help alleviate the burden. However, for all their industry and tactical discipline, Rangers do lack the creative edge to trouble the best European defences.

A third-place finish in their group, which would bring a drop down to the Europa League, may just be Rangers' best hope of an extended European run.

THE COACH

WALTER SMITH (SINCE JANUARY 2007)

After last season's damp squib, he will be desperate to make more of an impact in Europe in what is expected to be his last season at the helm.

KEY PLAYER

STEVEN DAVIS

Last season's SPFA Player of the Year should occupy a more central position this season and his playmaking skills will be pivotal to Rangers ability to mount meaningful attacks.

TACTICS

Rangers have experimented with a five-man midfield, with Lee McCulloch anchoring, and Naismith and Kyle Lafferty – both strikers by natural inclination – in wide positions behind lone forward Miller. It has worked to good effect and the generally cautious Smith is likely to make use of it in Europe.

REAL MADRID (SPA)

Mourinho's mission

The arrival of last season's winning-coach has further raised expectations at the Bernabeu

World Cup star...Ozil

WINNING a 10th European Cup remains the obsession for Real Madrid and the arrival of Jose Mourinho – the man who won the Champions League in Madrid's backyard in May – has only heightened the level of expectation that this could finally be their season.

Madrid's exit to Lyon in the first knockout round in March, despite the high-profile, world-record signings of Cristiano Ronaldo and Kaka in the summer of 2009, signalled the end of coach Manuel Pellegrini.

Mourinho has already tried to buy himself time, saying that his teams only reach fruition in their second season. His arrival appears to signal the end of president Florentino Perez's galactico policy, though Madrid have signed a World Cup star in Mesut Ozil. Mourinho also displayed no sentiment in disposing of club icons Raul and Guti. Ozil and another Germany World Cup success, Sami Khedira, may not provide the flair that Perez has demanded from previous big-name signings, but they fit well within the template of a younger, more functional side that Mourinho is trying to build in Madrid.

The future of Kaka remains in question following a pre-season injury, while the positions of Karim Benzema – a Perez signing 12 months ago – is similarly uncertain as Mourinho says he will put "talent before price tags".

The battle between Perez and the "Special One" is likely to be one of the defining storylines of Madrid's season.

THE COACH

JOSE MOURINHO (SINCE JULY 2010)

Has arrived in Madrid with a huge reputation, but with his record comes a giant – unrealistic, perhaps – expectation that he will deliver the European Cup.

KEY PLAYER

MESUT OZIL

A lot will be expected of the new signing from Werder Bremen, especially with Kaka sidelined for the early part of the campaign. The 21-year-old represents a different kind of galactico.

TACTICS

Function over style is the Mourinho way, which means Gonzalo Higuain is likely to be ahead of Benzema. Kaka's injury prompted the signing of Ozil, which in turn means fewer chances for Sergio Canalas and Rafael Van der Vaart. New boys Pedro Leon and Di Maria will compete to start on the right of midfield.

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ROMA (ITA)

Paying the price

Financial problems off the pitch may well hinder the club's recent progress on it

Club talisman...Totti

CLAUDIO RANIERI'S side gave Internazionale a run for their money last term, taking the Italian title race to the wire, with Inter having to win their last game to retain the title.

But throughout their revival under the ex-Chelsea boss, Roma's future has been uncertain and they are now effectively controlled by their main creditor, UniCredit, who have put the club on the market for an asking price of £125million.

While a buyer is sought, Rosella Sensi, daughter of former owner Franco Sensi, still runs the club, but few transfers were concluded this summer. Although Simplicio was signed on a free from Palermo, the big story of the summer was the arrival of Adriano from Flamengo.

The former Parma and Inter striker had huge personal problems during his last spell in Italian football but a loan spell at Sao Paulo has revived his career and last season he helped Flamengo to win the Brazilian championship.

Whether Adriano can inspire Roma to similar success remains to be seen. Certainly a good working relationship with club talisman Francesco Totti will be crucial. Totti's physical influence is declining but he remains a hugely important figure at the club, along with Montenegrin striker Mirko Vucinic.

With a revived Juventus offering more competition on the domestic front, Roma may find their resources stretched in European competition. Ranieri has defied the critics before, but he may find this latest challenge beyond him.

THE COACH

CLAUDIO RANIERI (SINCE SEPTEMBER 2009)
The former Roma player bounced back from being sacked by Juventus to lead cash-strapped Roma to a Serie A runners-up spot last season.

KEY PLAYER

ADRIANO

The one-time "enfant terrible" of Italian football is back – and "champing at the bit" – after rescuing his career with a spell back in his native Brazil.

FLUID ATTACKING APPROACH

Early suggestions were that new signing Adriano would be played in a withdrawn role behind main striker Vucinic, with Totti and Daniele De Rossi being deployed in wide roles. However, fluidity is the name of the game in Roma's attacking third and Adriano could easily be deployed further forward.

ROSENBORG (NOR)

Sixth spell for coach

When their coach left to take charge of Sweden earlier this year, the Norwegian champions turned to a familiar face

Prolific...Iversen

FOR the last 20 years Rosenborg have been the dominant force in Norwegian football. Having won the league for 13 consecutive seasons from 1992, the club had a short transitional period before regaining the title last season, and look set to repeat that feat this campaign.

Their entertaining and attacking football is based on the principles laid down by Nils Arne Eggen in the early 1990s. When Erik Hamren left to take charge of Sweden's national team, Rosenborg again turned to 68-year-old Eggen – it is his sixth stint as their coach. Eggen will hold the reins until the end of the domestic season, when Staebaek boss Jan Jonsson will take over.

The current team is a fine blend of Norwegian and Swedish players, with Ghana's Anthony Annan the midfield anchor. Swedish goalkeeper Daniel Orlund has been solid and reliable, while his countrymen Mikael Lustig and Mikael Dorsin are full-backs who love to attack and both have scored important goals.

Kris Stadsgaard and Vadim Demidov are an effective central defensive duo, though Demidov has been strongly linked with a move to Real Sociedad of Spain.

In midfield, Per Ciljan Skjelbred has shown flair, but 18-year-old Markus Henriksen, the son of assistant coach Trond Henriksen, has stolen the headlines this summer, scoring vital goals.

In attack, veterans Rade Prica and Steffen Iversen are still sharp, but they can also call on the pace of Trond Olsen and Morten Moldskred.

THE COACH

NILS ARNE EGGEN (SINCE MAY 2010)

One of the most respected coaches in Norway – and the most successful, winning numerous trophies with the club.

KEY PLAYER

STEFFEN IVERSEN
The ex-Tottenham Hotspur striker is still one of the most prolific in the Norwegian league. He is renowned for his aerial ability and all-round footballing nous.

EGGEN'S ENTERTAINING PHILOSOPHY

Rosenborg love to attack and score goals. Iversen plays in a hanging role behind Prica, while wingers Moldskred and Olsen inject pace if selected from the bench. Midfielders Henriksen and Fredrik Winsnes tend to attack from deep and the full-backs also weigh in with vital goals. The team defends as a solid unit.

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RUBIN KAZAN (RUS)

A memorable debut

The only non-Moscow club ever to win successive Russian titles hope for further European surprises

Wide man...Kasaev

DESPITE only joining the Russian top flight for the first time as recently as 2003, the club from the Republic of Tatarstan quickly established themselves in the Premier League – so comfortably, in fact, that they have been champions for the past two seasons.

They also made their mark in the Champions League during their debut campaign last term, taking points off Dynamo Kyiv and eventual winners Internazionale in the group stage, and recording a memorable 2-1 win at Barcelona.

Despite the loss of Argentinian playmaker Alejandro Dominguez to Valencia and international striker Aleksander Bukharov to Zenit St Petersburg, Rubin are enjoying another good season domestically, though Zenit will take some catching at the top of the table. Even in the absence of injured centre-back Roman Sharonov, Rubin's defence is considered the best in Russia, while goalkeeper Sergey Ryzhikov has been outstanding for the past two seasons.

Isreal's Bibras Natkho in central midfield will be supported by fast and skilful wingers who are extremely effective on the quick counter-attack. However, current wide men Gokdeniz Karadeniz and Alan Kasaev may find themselves challenged for an automatic place in the starting line-up by Aleksandr Ryazantsev – scorer of the opening goal in last season's remarkable win at Camp Nou – once he recovers from injury.

THE COACH

KURBAN BERDYEV (SINCE 2001)
In charge of Rubin for almost a decade, this highly religious and meditative man has always given a firm "no" every time he has been asked if he would like to become Russia's national coach.

KEY PLAYER

CESAR NAVAS
The tall central defender joined Rubin from Racing Santander for £1.8million last year and instantly became a key figure in the team's defensive approach.

DEFENSIVELY SOUND

Injured defenders **Sharonov and Lasha Salukvadze** will be **replaced by the 6ft 6in Aleksandr Orekhov and Vitali Kaleshin respectively. The loss of Bukharov and Semak to Zenit has been offset by the signing of Nigeria striker Obafemi Martins from Wolfsburg for £6.5million.**

SALZBURG (AUT)

Investors seek return

A name change and a big cash injection have yet to bring a group-stage campaign in the Champions League

UEFA Cup winner...Stevens

BOUGHT by the Red Bull drinks company in 2005, the club have used their new financial muscle to become the dominant force in Austrian football, winning the title in three of the last four seasons.

However, the owners have yet to fulfil their ambitions of reaching the Champions League group stage, with Salzburg falling in the qualifying stages three times – twice to teams from Israel. They did reach the group stage back in the 1994-95 season, but that was under their former guise, Austria Salzburg.

Although they dominated the Austrian championship last season, they nearly contrived to blow the title in the closing stages. Needing a draw in their penultimate game at home to Austria Wien, they lost 1-0 to an injury-time goal at a stunned Red Bull stadium. The result left them just one point ahead of Austria, but they held their nerve to win their last game, 2-0 at Sturm Graz, to retain their crown.

The champions have been active in the transfer market this summer, signing Holland midfielder David Mendes from AZ Alkmaar, Argentinian forward Gonzalo Zarate from Grasshopper, Uruguayan forward Joaquin Boghossian from Cerro, striker Roman Wallner from LASK Linz and midfielder Jakob Jantscher from Sturm Graz. The cosmopolitan squad also includes players from Sweden, Germany, Serbia, Nigeria, Switzerland, Uganda and Bosnia.

THE COACH

HUUB STEVENS (SINCE JULY 2009)
A former Holland international, his past coaching posts include Roda JC and PSV in his homeland, and a six-year stint at Schalke, where he won the 1997 UEFA Cup and the German Cup twice.

KEY PLAYER

DAVID MENDES
The defensive midfielder joined in July, admitting that he made the move in the hope of playing Champions League football. Won the Eredivisie title with AZ in 2008.

DOMESTIC DOMINANCE

The formation varies between 4-2-3-1 and 4-1-4-1. In the former, Franz Schiemer usually partners Mendes in front of the defence, while in the latter Mendes plays there on his own. Dusan Svento sometimes makes way for Jakob Jantscher, who can also play at left-back instead of Andreas Ulmer.

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SAMPDORIA (ITA)

Long wait

Eighteen years after finishing European Cup runners-up, Samp are back among the elite

New challenge...Di Carlo

WITH Luigi Delneri – who is now at Juventus – leading from the touchline and Antonio Cassano excelling on the pitch, Samp finished fourth in Serie A last season to qualify for Europe's premier competition for the first time since 1992 – when Gianluca Vialli, Roberto Mancini and company lost to Barcelona in extra time in the European Cup Final at Wembley.

New coach Domenico Di Carlo steered Chievo to decent mid-table finishes in the past two seasons, but whether he can now take on a completely different challenge with Sampdoria remains to be seen.

There were few new arrivals over the summer, though midfielder Stefano Guberti was signed on a permanent deal after being on loan from Roma. Full-back Luciano Zauri, loaned from Lazio last term, is another returnee with a further season-long deal agreed.

The key to Sampdoria's progress in Europe, however, will be the form of established stars such as forwards Cassano and Giampaolo Pazzini. Cassano seems happy with his lot and says: "I want to finish my career here. At Samp I'm fine, I feel like a king. The most important thing in life is happiness and here I have found it."

THE COACH

DOMENICO DI CARLO (SINCE MAY 2010)
The former Parma and Chievo coach replaced Juventus-bound Luigi Delneri.

KEY PLAYER

ANTONIO CASSANO
Much-travelled Cassano, the "bad boy" of Italian football, has rebuilt his career in Genoa. His reward is a place in Cesare Prandelli's new national side.

A MORE CAUTIOUS APPROACH

Under Delneri, Samp played an attacking 4-4-2 with wingers Franco Semioli and Guberti, but Di Carlo will probably sacrifice one of the wingers for a more defensive midfielder. Cassano and Pazzini are the key to Samp's gameplan, with Cassano operating as a second striker behind the predatory Pazzini.

SCHALKE (GER)

Raul is a real boost

The Bundesliga runners-up will be inspired by the arrival of a Spanish legend and Champions League record holder

Top-class competitor...Raul

IN their three previous outings in the Champions League, Schalke have only once got to the knock-out phase – the quarter-finals in 2007-08. So Royal Blues coach and general manager Felix Magath is pinning much on the arrival of Real Madrid striker Raul. He may not have cost a transfer fee, but he has inflated the cash-strapped club's wage bill with his reported £8 million salary.

Yes, it is a gamble. At 33, Raul is on the downslope of his career and spent most of last term on Real's bench. Yet an ecstatic Magath is adamant the Spaniard still has much to offer as a finisher – he is, after all, the top scorer in the history of the Champions League, a top-class competitor and a role model to the many fledgling players in the squad.

While the unveiling of Raul has sparked a huge buzz in the Ruhr, some sceptics suggest that Schalke are considerably less competitive than they were last season when they finished a very creditable second in the Bundesliga.

The summer departures of central defensive bulwark Marcelo Bordon (to Al Rayyan of Qatar), right-back Rafinha (to Genoa) and leading marksman Kevin Kuranyi (to Dynamo Moscow) are a body blow. And on the whole the new faces do not inspire. Brought in from Real Madrid, former Germany stopper Christoph Metzelder has long been injury prone and, for all their potential, Slovakia attacker Erik Jendrisek from Kaiserslautern, Japan full-back Atsuto Uchida from Kashima Antlers and Greek centre-back Kyriakos Papadopoulos from Olympiakos may struggle to add value on the European stage.

THE COACH

FELIX MAGATH (SINCE JULY 2009)
A drill sergeant of a boss who sets great store on superior fitness and his side's collective commitment.

Once known as an anti-relegation firefighter, he has since proved a consummate title-team builder at Bayern Munich and Wolfsburg.

KEY PLAYER

IVAN RAKITIC
Has found consistency, personality and a greater physical presence, causing Magath to compare him to Bastian Schweinsteiger.

COUNTER-ATTACKS VIA THE ENGINE ROOM

Magath prefers a midfield diamond but may opt for an engine room format: one defensive midfielder and three creative types. The coach usually likes counter-attacking long-balls to the front runners and well-worked set-pieces, though he has suggested he would like to see more guile from the team in open play.

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SEVILLA (SPA)

Onwards and upwards

Twice winners of the UEFA Cup, the Spanish side would appear to be on the rise in Europe

Influential...Luis Fabiano

AN acrobatic 93rd-minute volley on the final day of last season saw Sevilla scrape into fourth place and thereby qualify for the play-off stage of this season's Champions League.

Last season, they won their group – ahead of Stuttgart, Unirea Urziceni and Rangers – before coming unstuck against CSKA Moscow in the first knockout round. However, getting to that stage still represented steady progress in Europe for a club that won successive UEFA Cup Finals, in 2006 and 2007.

Sevilla are a model of relative continuity in Spanish football: a well-run club who have bought and sold well in the transfer market. Technical director Monchi identifies new talent, while president Jose Maria del Nido drives a hard bargain in negotiations.

This summer, the sale of Adriano to Barcelona came as a surprise but probably ensured that Sevilla avoided the need to offload their two most influential figures: Brazil striker Luis Fabiano and Spain international Jesus Navas.

France defender Sebastien Squillaci also left, joining Arsenal, with Alexis arriving from Valencia as his replacement.

THE COACH

ANTONIO ALVAREZ (SINCE MARCH 2010)
Former assistant to Juande Ramos, he stepped up as first-team coach following the sacking of Manolo Jimenez.

KEY PLAYER

LUIS FABIANO
A consistent goalscorer and Sevilla had to resist offers from Marseille, among others, for the Brazil striker this summer. Scored three goals for his country in the 2010 World Cup finals.

CREATIVITY FROM THE FLANKS

Sevilla favour a **straight 4-4-2** with Navas an **important creative** outlet on the wing. **Diego Capel is** another wide option, **while Alvaro Negredo** will be **expected to** step in as a **replacement for** Luis Fabiano or **Freddy** Kanoute in attack.

SHAKHTAR DONETSK (UKR)

Unknown quantity

From UEFA Cup winners to Champions League flops – but which Shakhtar will turn up this time?

Iconic figure...Srna

WHO knows what to expect from the Ukraine's biggest club? Having been knocked out in the qualifying stage of last year's Champions League by modest Romanian outfit Timisoara just months after winning the UEFA Cup, Shakhtar fans could be forgiven for thinking anything could happen this time around.

One promising sign is that, after winning their fifth league title, the Miners have retained all their star players, including Croatia winger and skipper Darijo Srna, Brazilian midfielders Fernandinho and Jadson, and powerful Brazilian forward Luiz Adriano. An addition after the winter break was inventive 19-year-old Brazilian midfielder Douglas Costa from Gremio.

"We failed to progress to the Champions League group stage last season but showed our strong character and finished six points ahead of Dynamo Kyiv in the Ukraine Premier League," says coach Mircea Lucescu. "So we are heading in the right way. Our priority this season is to qualify for the play-off phase in the Champions League.

"We hope this target is quite realistic and corresponds to the current stature of our club."

To achieve this aim, industrial billionaire Rinat Akhmetov generously complied with the requests of Lucescu by bringing home defender Dmytro Chygrynskiy from Barcelona for £12.5million, signing Brazil-born Croatia striker Eduardo from Arsenal for £6m and welcoming back Bolivia striker Marcelo Moreno from his loan spell at Wigan Athletic.

THE COACH

MIRCEA LUCESCU (SINCE 2004)
Recruited from Turkish side Besiktas, he has been granted the coaching post at Shakhtar for life by Akhmetov following his achievements at the club.

KEY PLAYER

DARIJO SRNA
Attacking defender who joined Shakhtar from Hajduk Split in 2003. He is an iconic figure at the Donbass Arena after turning down offers from European giants such as Bayern Munich and Chelsea.

ENHANCED ATTACKING OPTIONS

Lucescu plays a classic 4-4-2, with the emphasis on the attacking potential of Willian on the left and Douglas Costa on the right. The arrival of the experienced Eduardo should settle the problem of replacing second striker Brandao, who moved to Marseille in early 2009 after seven seasons with Shakhtar.

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SHERIFF (MLD)

Young talent

Continued success on the pitch is helping the Moldovan champions profit off it

Positive...Diedhiou (left)

FOR the second successive season Sheriff, the team from the Moldovan capital of Tiraspol, will play in the group stage of a European competition.

Having chalked up 10 domestic titles in a row, Sheriff are now starting to make their mark in Europe and gave a decent account of themselves in a strong Europa League group last season in which they faced Twente, Steaua Bucharest and Fenerbahce.

This time around they had serious ambitions of reaching the Champions League group stag. In order to compete both at domestic and continental level, they have been busy adding to their squad during the summer and are likely to rotate their players if and when they progress.

The club's strategy is to buy youngsters from all over the world – they currently have players in their ranks from 12 different countries – who they can then showcase in Europe before selling on. This approach has worked successfully and, as well as bringing a financial profit, has also seen the club go from strength to strength on the pitch. They have even started to buy players from bigger Balkan countries – their Bulgarian keeper Vladislav Stoyanov is the latest target for leading foreign clubs.

THE COACH

ANDREI SOSNITSKIY (SINCE JANUARY 2010)
Was assistant to Leonid Koutchouk before taking over from his fellow Belarusian at the start of this year.

KEY PLAYER

VAZHA TARKHNISHVILI
The 38-year-old central defender is club captain and has played in all 10 of Sheriff's Moldovan championship-winning teams.

MORE EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Well organised and solid in defence – where keeper Stoyanov is outstanding – their major problem lies in attack and a lack of good forwards was highlighted in Europe last year. But, attacking midfielder Amath Diedhiou is positive: "We have a good chance of getting through and will do all it takes to get the result."

SPARTA PRAGUE (CZE)

Domestic dominance

Unbeaten in the league last year, coach Chovanec has instilled new confidence in his side

Wide midfielder...Sionko

HISTORICALLY the most successful Czech club, "Iron Sparta" emerged from a period in rivals Slavia's shade to reclaim the league title without losing a game. And for the new campaign, their squad – on paper, at least – looks even stronger.

Sparta's renaissance owes much to Jozef Chovanec, who gave up being sporting director to take charge of a team in turmoil. In his British-style manager's role, he brought in new blood like Slovakia midfielder Juraj Kucka and Ivorian striker Bony Wilfried, while retaining key veterans goalkeeper Jaromir Blazek and defender Tomas Repka.

More recently, Chovanec has targeted experienced players. Former Slavia defender Erich Brabec and wide midfielder Libor Sionko arrived last season, while playmaker Marek Matejovsky arrived from Reading in the summer to add more flair to an already decent midfield.

The summer's other big signing was goalkeeper Daniel Zitka, whose arrival from Anderlecht provides cover for the 37-year-old Blazek and gives Sparta the luxury of having two Czech internationals vying for the goalkeeper's jersey. Another new arrival, young Cameroonian forward Leonard Kweuke, provides further options up front.

Sparta look to Tomas Repka for on-field leadership, which, given the fiery defender's patchy disciplinary record, can be a weakness. Showing no signs of mellowing with age, Repka has already picked up a three-game domestic ban this season for spitting at an opponent.

THE COACH

JOZEF CHOVANEC (SINCE 2009)
Currently billed as "general sporting manager", the former Czech national team coach has brought success and stability back to the club. He has served as player, coach, sporting director and president.

KEY PLAYER

TOMAS REPKA
Disciplinary record aside, the 36-year-old bad boy remains a talismanic figure at Letna, where, in addition to anchoring the defence, his ferocious will-to-win can lift the whole team.

VETERANS TAKE CHARGE AT THE BACK

Chovanec has stuck to a 4-1-4-1 formation this season, with Austrian defender Niklas Hoheneder filling in for the injured Lubos Husek in front of the back four. The busy Kucka takes a more defensive midfield role, freeing Matejovsky, Sionko and Vaclav Kadlec to get forward. Wilfried is the preferred choice as lone striker.

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SPARTAK MOSCOW (RUS)

The people's club

Big support for the red and whites across Russia hasn't guaranteed much success of late

Local talent...Parshivlyuk (in red)

RUSSIAN champions nine times, "the people's club" – as Spartak are known due to their huge popularity – were league runners-up last year, but they have not won the title since 2001 and have changed their head coach nine times during that period in pursuit of success.

Currently stuck in mid-table, honours look unlikely again this term and current boss Valery Karpin – the club's former midfield star who combines the post with that of the club's general manager – is desperately seeking reinforcements. Argentinian defender Nicolas Pareja is one player who has joined, signed from Espanyol for a fee of around £10million, along with Celtic's Republic of Ireland midfielder Aiden McGeady in a deal reported to be worth around £9.5m.

Spartak's game relies heavily on the form of Brazilian midfielder Alex and his compatriot striker Welliton – the league's top scorer last year who has been repeatedly asked to acquire Russian citizenship and join the national team. However, injuries have meant that neither has yet to reproduce last season's form so far.

First-choice goalkeeper Soslan Dzhanayev was recently dropped after several poor mistakes and replaced by Russia Under-21 Sergei Pesyakov, but he has not looked overly reliable either.

Spartak do, however, boast some good local talent, with young wing-backs Sergei Parshivlyuk and Yevgeni Makeyev already knocking on the national team's door. Meanwhile, 17-year-old Georgia international playmaker Jano Ananidze has the makings of a midfield star, according to Karpin.

THE MAIN MEN

VALERY KARPIN (SINCE APRIL 2009)
Hired Michael Laudrup in the autumn of 2008 and then replaced him as coach after just a few games the following season.

KEY PLAYER

ALEX
Brazil international playmaker who had been on Dunga's shortlist for this year's World Cup after a brilliant 2009 season with Spartak, but did not make the final cut after a dip in form.

DEFENSIVE LAPSES

In aiming to revive Spartak's famous passing game of the past, Karpin's side often control a game only to make silly mistakes in defence through a lack of concentration and lose out to better organised sides. However, the Alex-Welliton strike partnership can pose real problems for any opposition.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR (ENG)

New territory

Spurs broke into the Premier League top four last term, but can they maintain that standard this season?

Pacy...Bale

TOTTENHAM broke through the Premier League glass ceiling last term, dislodging Liverpool from the top four and opening up a new world of possibilities by claiming the fourth Champions League spot. However, they were wise to be mindful of how Everton, the only other team to break into the top four in recent years, failed at the qualifying hurdle five years ago, against Villarreal.

Given the breakthrough season ahead, it was a surprise that Spurs had a quiet summer on the transfer front, especially given manager Harry Redknapp's reputation.

Brazilian Under-20 star Sandro, a highly-rated defensive midfielder, was the most significant newcomer, but Spurs had to wait until the end of Internacional's Libertadores Cup campaign before he came to London.

The lack of signings reflects the fact that Tottenham have been run within their means by chairman Daniel Levy, the front man for an investment company owned by Bahamas-based billionaire Joe Lewis.

Redknapp still has plenty of capable players, including Croatia's Luka Modric and pacy Wales wing-back Gareth Bale, but his options in central defence, where Ledley King and Jonathan Woodgate are troubled by chronic injuries, are more limited.

The dilemma for Redknapp is that his side could enjoy a good – and profitable – run in the Champions League for the first time yet take their eye off the ball in the battle to consolidate their top-four place in the always competitive Premier League.

THE COACH

HARRY REDKNAPP (SINCE OCTOBER 2008)
The most successful English coach in the Premier League faces his biggest test yet.

KEY PLAYER

LUKA MODRIC
Although slight in stature, the former Dinamo Zagreb midfielder will play a crucial creative role for Spurs, either from a central position or out wide.

PLENTY OF OPTIONS

Spurs use a fairly conventional 4-4-2. Roman Pavlyuchenko is an alternative up front, while Tom Huddlestone and Sandro are defensive midfield options. Bale can switch to left-back, with Modric moving to left midfield, leaving a space for Niko Kranjcar or David Bentley. New signing William Gallas provides centre-back cover.

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TWENTE (HOL)

There at last

So close over the past couple of seasons, the club from Enschede are finally in the group stage

Staying...Douglas

AFTER failing to overcome Arsenal and Sporting Lisbon in recent qualifiers, it's third time lucky for the club who, having won their first Dutch championship, finally make their Champions League group stage debut.

Although coach Steve McClaren and key players such as Ronnie Stam, Miroslav Stoch, Blaise Nkufo and Kenneth Perez have left, don't expect this team to collapse. New coach Michel Preud'homme has found some respectable replacements in Marc Janko, Roberto Rosales and Emir Bajrami, while several exotic youngsters are knocking on the door. And, much to the delight of the fans, Twente have also managed to keep key players Bryan Ruiz and Douglas.

Preud'homme will look to maintain the head of steam built by McClaren and Fred Rutten in the past, knowing that operating as a team is Twente's biggest strength and makes it possible to play attractive football.

Although newcomers at the highest level, they won't be the freshman's failure that AZ Alkmaar were last year. In fact, depending on the draw, they have a decent chance of surviving the group stage.

Even if they don't, it will still have been a valuable experience as the ambitious Tukkers close the gap with Holland's top clubs.

THE COACH

MICHEL PREUD'HOMME (SINCE MAY 2010)

The former Belgium goalkeeper is a control freak and a bit hot-headed but, having already won silverware at Standard Liege and Gent, he looks set to continue McClaren's good work.

KEY PLAYER

BRYAN RUIZ

The Costa Rican scored 24 league goals last term and new coach Preud'homme, who knows him from their time together at Gent, should be able to get the best out of him.

A MORE POSITIVE APPROACH

Preud'homme will **be more attack-minded** than McClaren. **Janko will aim to emulate** his Austrian league **goalscoring, while** Ruiz will have the **freedom to come** inside. In midfield, **Theo Janssen** will be the playmaker, **while the** combative Cheikh **Tiote and** unsung local hero **Wout** Brama will do their defensive duties.

VALENCIA (SPA)

Paying the price

The enforced sale of big-name players could hamper this season's European campaign

Target man...Soldado

IT was all change for Valencia during the summer as the club's financial predicament finally caught up with them. Shining lights David Villa and David Silva were sold, to Barcelona and Manchester City respectively, but the club still remains in a precarious position due to the continued failure to sell the Mestalla stadium. Meanwhile, work on the new Mestalla arena remains uncompleted because of the severe cash-flow constraints.

Coach Unai Emery is confident that his new signings, which include Turkey midfielder Mehmet Topal and former Real Madrid striker Roberto Soldado, can gel in time to allow a challenge at home as well as in Europe. However, the numerous player departures – which also included Nikola Zigic to Birmingham City – and subsequent arrivals, make any prediction about Valencia's prospects this term hard to call.

Their seeding for the Champions League group stage makes the knockout phase a realistic target, but whether they have the strength in depth to mount a serious challenge remains to be seen.

Last season, Unai Emery guided Valencia back to the Champions League after two seasons away. He now faces a far bigger challenge: repeating that form without their greatest player of recent years, David Villa.

THE COACH

UNAI EMERY (SINCE 2008)

A former left-sided midfielder who spent most of his playing career in the Spanish second tier. Still only 38, he proved an excellent coach during two seasons at Almeria. He led Valencia to sixth spot in his first term and third last time around.

KEY PLAYER

JOAQUIN

A big season for the right winger, who takes over the number seven shirt from David Villa.

IT'S ALL IN THE MIX

Unai Emery favours 4-3-3, with wide men Joaquin and Juan Mata on either side of central striker Soldado. Joaquin could also play centrally behind Soldado, with Pablo Hernandez coming in on the right wing. Aritz Aduriz, a summer signing from Mallorca, could fill in for the injured Soldado in early-season matches.

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WERDER BREMEN (GER)

All-out attack

Coach Schaaf needs to be less gung-ho going forward if his side are to advance this season

Argumentative...Arnautovic

ANOTHER season in Europe for the northern German club; another guaranteed campaign of free-flowing, risk-taking, entertaining football. But will the results follow?

Although their all-or-nothing approach always pleases the crowds, Bremen can also dive headlong into sheer naivety, often pushing too many men forward and leaving themselves exposed to a swift counter. To prosper at the highest continental level, coach Thomas Schaaf may have to trim his attack-minded sails.

Third in the Bundesliga last season, the club have been in something of a state of flux this summer. Veteran defensive midfielder and skipper Torsten Frings missed part of pre-season because of a groin operation and could be rusty, while outstanding Brazilian centre-back Naldo continues to suffer with a mysterious knee complaint which apparently no one can diagnose. Worries also abound about how they will cope without Germany's playmaking starlet Mesut Ozil, who has moved on to Real Madrid after his brilliant World Cup.

Bremen's sole new signing of note was Austria striker Marko Arnautovic, who cost £6.5million from Twente. Unsuccessfully loaned to Internazionale last term, he has a reputation for being argumentative and has already clashed with the equally forthright Frings, who called the new boy "arrogant".

THE COACH

THOMAS SCHAAF (SINCE MAY 1999)

In his 12th season as club coach, his attack-minded philosophy is in complete contrast to his dour demeanour – not to mention his trademark rugged tackling during a long playing stint with Bremen.

KEY PLAYER

CLAUDIO PIZARRO

The Peruvian's 133rd Bundesliga goal on the final day of last season made him the joint-highest foreign scorer in league history.

SCHAAF'S FORWARD PLANNING

Never one to opt for a safety-first set-up, Schaaf normally sticks to two main templates: a 4-4-2 built around a midfield diamond or a 4-2-3-1 which features Pizarro at the point of attack, supported by a trio of attacking midfielders. If behind in a game, a quartet of forwards will often be deployed.

YOUNG BOYS (SWI)

Looking to improve

The side from Berne were looking to put an end to a disappointing run of form in the Champions League

Most experienced...Spycher

ONCE the major force in Swiss football – they claimed four consecutive league titles between 1957 and 1960, and even reached the 1959 European Cup Final – the team from Berne, in the distinctive yellow-and-black hoops, have added only one Swiss title to their collection since then, in 1986. During the late 1990s they came perilously close to bankruptcy and they also languished in the second division for a number of seasons.

With a fresh injection of capital, the club were saved, rebuilt and have now re-emerged to become the nearly men of Swiss football, finishing league runners-up for the past three seasons.

The title appeared to be in the bag last term, but Young Boys somehow squandered a 10-point lead and lost 2-0 at home to Basle on the final day to hand the championship to their opponents.

Young Boys have been involved in European football every season since 2003 – however, their campaigns have always been short-lived affairs and they have never managed to get through more than one round. The last time they made an appearance in the Champions League was in 2004-05 when they were beaten 5-2 on aggregate by Red Star Belgrade at the first hurdle.

THE COACH

VLADIMIR PETKOVIC (SINCE 2008)

Born in Bosnia but spent most of his playing career, and his entire coaching career, in Switzerland. In two seasons at Young Boys, they have finished as runners-up each time.

KEY PLAYER

CHRISTOPH SPYCHER

The team's most experienced player. He had five seasons in the Bundesliga with Eintracht Frankfurt and won 47 caps for Switzerland, also playing at Euro 2004 and 2008, and the 2006 World Cup.

LONE ATTACKER FED FROM THE FLANKS

The usual formation is a 4-2-3-1, with Henri Bienvenu as lone striker, David Degen and Senad Lulic attacking down the flanks and Moreno Costanzo as playmaker. A three-man defence is sometimes used, with Francois Affolter, Emiliano Dudar and Ammar Jemal as the back line. Spycher can also play at left-back.

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ZENIT ST PETERSBURG (RUS)

Money talks

The financial support of energy giants Gazprom is fuelling Zenit's drive for success

Pacy playmaker...Danny

RUSSIAN champions in 2007, UEFA Cup winners a year later, and nine points clear at the top of the league at the halfway point this season, Zenit continue to go from strength to strength.

Backed by the powerful Gazprom company, they rule the transfer market too, signing international striker Aleksandr Bukharov and Russia captain Sergei Semak from last year's champions Rubin Kazan, Serbian defender Alexander Lukovic from Udinese and Porto centre-back Bruno Alves, who cost £18million. And these join a side that revolves around Portugal playmaker Danny, who was signed from Dynamo Moscow in 2008 for a record £24m.

There is little doubt that Russia's new coach, Dick Advocaat, who was formerly with Zenit, will build his squad on the basis of his former club. Besides Bukharov and Semak, Vyacheslav Malafeev, Aleksandr Anyukov, Konstantin Zyryanov, Igor Denisov, Vladimir Bystrov and Aleksandr Kerzhakov could all feature at international level, yet some will find it hard to win a place in their club's starting line-up.

As St Petersburg's only top-level team, Zenit enjoy the city's exclusive and overwhelming support. Home games are played at the 22,000-capacity Petrovsky stadium, but a new arena is currently under construction with plans for it to be the focal point of the country's 2018 World Cup bid.

THE COACH

LUCIANO SPALLETTI (SINCE JANUARY 2010)
Italian who joined Zenit from Roma and has already led them to Russian Cup glory in May. "I knew what I would find here," he said. "An extraordinary club, which backed me from the first day."

KEY PLAYER

DANNY
Fast and skilful, he missed most of last season due to injury but got in shape quick enough to be selected for Portugal's World Cup squad this summer.

LIGHTNING-FAST COUNTER-ATTACKS

Quick transition from defence to attack is ensured by the pace of Bystrov and Danny. Under Spalletti, the full-backs are mostly preoccupied with their defensive duties, but Anyukov is dangerous going forward. If the coach is willing to sacrifice one of his midfielders, Kerzhakov could join Bukharov up front.

ZILINA (SLK)

Size no barrier

A small budget and a tiny ground haven't stopped the northern Slovak side from dominating at home

Strength in depth...Mario Pecalka

THE current Slovak champions have been consistency itself at home with five titles and eight top-two finishes in the last nine seasons. They have a settled unit and are unbeaten in the league, with 11 goals in four games. Another stabilising factor is midfield captain Robert Jez, unshaken by his penalty miss in the 3-1 victory over Litex Lovech. That success set up a home and away tie with Sparta Prague. A 3-0 overall win, with Momodou Ceesay scoring in both games, earned Zilina a debut spot in the Champions League.

The northern Slovak outfit are no strangers to Europe, having gained a consolation win at Aston Villa in 2008 and beaten Hajduk Split in the Champions League third qualifying round a year later. And all this on a relatively modest budget as most home gates are below 5,000 and the Stadium Pod Dubnom can only accommodate just over twice that.

Coach Pavel Hapal relies on a mix of mainly Slovak and Czech players, bolstered by the recent arrival of Gambia striker Ceesay from Westerlo to partner Nigeria-born Benin international Bello Babatunde. Slovak international Tomas Oravec, the league's top scorer in 2007, doesn't always start but can still pop up to score vital goals.

Fans of the yellow-and-greens are bracing themselves for a tight title race with 2009 champions Slovan Bratislava, and dreaming of further Champions League joy.

THE COACH

PAVEL HAPAL (SINCE 2009)
Former Czech international who won the Slovak title after two seasons in charge at Zilina and stints at several clubs in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

KEY PLAYER

ROBERT JEZ
The captain was an essential part of the famed 99-goal, title-winning Zilina side of 2007. He was overlooked for his country's 2010 World Cup squad.

HAPAL'S FLEXIBLE STEWARDSHIP

Zilina tend to concede few goals and score hatfuls when the mood takes them, thanks to Hapal's tactical flexibility, occasionally using new signing Argentinian midfielder Sergio Javier Vittor as a link between the back four and the midfield. Bello can drop into midfield to give Ceesay or Oravec a roaming front role.

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EURO CLUB GUIDE 2010-11

Compiled by Nick Bidwell and Gavin Hamilton with contributions from Sam Beckwith (Czech Rep), Dan Brennan (Scotland), Peterjon Cresswell (Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia), Mehmet Demircan (Turkey), Klaas-Jan Droppert (Holland), Lou Economopoulos (Greece), Miron Goihman (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Moldova), Victor Gusev (Russia), Jim Holden (Denmark), Brian Homewood (Austria, Switzerland), Howard Johnson (France), Dariusz Kurowski (Poland), Vladimir Novak (Serbia), Sigurd Odegaard (Norway), Rumen Paytashev (Bulgaria), Pedro Pinto (Portugal), Zdavko Reic (Croatia), Egan Richardson (Finland), Mel Thomas (Wales), Radu Timofte (Romania), Oleg Zadernovsky (Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine)

AEK ATHENS (GRE)

Newly arrived...Bouba Diop (left)

PRE-SEASON wins over Rangers, Blackburn Rovers and Sydney left coach Dusan Bajevic claiming: "This AEK reminds me of the AEK of the 1990s and I believe in this team."

Two ex-Greece internationals boost their ranks: striker Nikos Liberopoulos, back from Germany, and defender Traianos Dellas, who last played in Cyprus. They have also signed Uruguayan left-back Claudio Dadomo and Senegalese midfielder Papa Bouba Diop from Portsmouth. Officials also hope that Argentinian strikers Nacho Scocco and Ismael Blanco will extend their contracts, as will Algeria forward Rafik Djebbour.

THE COACH

DUSAN BAJEVIC (SINCE NOVEMBER 2008)
Looking to bring back the glory days when he was first AEK coach – 1988 to 1996 – when they won four titles.

KEY PLAYER

NIKOS LIBEROPOULOS
The 35-year-old has chosen to end his playing career at the club where he became an inspirational leader.

TACTICS

Bajevic will combine youth with experience and newly arrived Bouba Diop is expected to control matters in midfield. Up front, Australian striker Nathan Burns will be used as an impact substitute.

AIK SOLNA (SWE)

Strategy...Bangura (left)

SINCE securing the Swedish double last year, almost nothing has gone right for AIK. First-teamers have left in droves, coach Mikael Stahre quit and headed to Greek side Panionios in April, and their form in this year's Allsvenskan has been disastrous – with relegation a real possibility.

The departure of striker Ivan Obolo, centre-back Jos Hooiveld, keeper Daniel Orlund and midfielders Bojan Djordjic and Martin Kayongo-Mutumba ripped the team apart and, with debts mounting, the search for replacements looks a hopeless task. New coach Alex Miller already has the local press on his back for publicly criticising the players.

THE COACH

ALEX MILLER (SINCE JUNE 2010)
The ex-Rangers left-back went on to be director of scouting and assistant coach at Liverpool.

KEY PLAYER

DANIEL TJERNSTROM
Tactically aware, the busy left-sided midfielder and AIK captain is closing in on 300 games for the club.

TACTICS

Miller is aiming for a more solid defence and twin-enforcers – new boys Helgi Danielsson and Robert Ahman-Persson – are vital. Playing on the break, a key man in this strategy is the Liberia midfielder Dulee Johnson.

AKTOBE (KAZ)

Captain...Smakov (left)

THIRD place in this year's Kazakhstan Premier League, which finished in August, put an end to Aktobe's impressive run of three consecutive championships.

Russian coach Vladimir Mukhanov's reliance on older, more experienced players has not been so successful at European level, though they did beat Olimpi Rustavi of Georgia in the Champions League second qualifying round this season before going out to Hapoel Tel Aviv, 3-2 on aggregate.

THE COACH

VLADIMIR MUKHANOV (SINCE 2006)
The 56-year-old Russian has worked with three different clubs – Tobol and Astana are the others – since moving to Kazakhstan in 2003.

KEY PLAYER

SAMAT SMAKOV
Club captain and long-serving international, the central defender has won the Kazakhstan league with four different clubs.

TACTICS

Mukhanov has an experienced pool of players such as Smakov, Murat Tleshev, Andrey Karpovich and Evgeniy Averchenko. The coach also has a habit of swapping his forwards, Tleshev and Ivan Peric, at half-time.

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ANORTHOSIS (CYP)

Veteran...Okkas

AS they proved two years ago – when beating Panathinaikos, and drawing with Werder Bremen and Internazionale in the Champions League group stage – Anorthosis have made great strides.

Although there are 17 foreigners in the squad, almost half of their starting line-up is Cypriot, including centre-back Nikos Katsavakis, midfielder Giannis Skopelitis and striker Giannis Okkas. Arguably their best bit of business this summer was the arrival of Argentinian keeper Marcos Arguello on a free transfer from Spanish side Orihuela.

THE COACH

GUILLERMO ANGEL HOYOS (SINCE MAY 2010)

A team-mate of Diego Maradona's in the Argentina side which won the World Youth Cup in 1979, he coached Lionel Messi at Barcelona B.

KEY PLAYER

CAFU

Portugal-born Cape Verde international who can be explosive one day and off-target the next.

TACTICS

The new coach usually goes with an adventurous 4-3-3, giving his forwards and midfielders plenty of freedom of expression. Able to control a game for long periods, they can be undone by a lack of a killer instinct.

APOEL (CYP)

Newcomer...Manduca

HAVING had their first taste of the Champions League group stage last year, APOEL are still smarting after relinquishing their domestic title to arch-rivals Omonia.

Keen to redress the balance, the club from Nicosia went on an extensive shopping expedition, picking three Brazilians in striker Ailton from Copenhagen, Metalurh Donetsk's William Boaventura and midfielder Gustavo Manduca from AEK Athens, and negotiating the return of Argentinian striker Esteban Solari from Almeria, who in a previous two-year spell at the club could not stop scoring.

THE COACH

IVAN JOVANOVIC (SINCE JANUARY 2008)

In his two spells as APOEL boss, he steered the club to the Cypriot league title in 2004 and 2009.

KEY PLAYER

AILTON

The Brazilian was a guaranteed scorer when leading the line for Orgryte in Sweden and Copenhagen.

TACTICS

APOEL play on the counter-attack and are well-drilled in defence. Their two holding midfielders, skipper Marinos Satsias and Dutchman Joost Broerse, do an excellent job protecting the back-four.

ARIS (GRE)

Experienced...Cuper

VICTORY in Poland helped Aris eliminate Jaggielonia Bialystok in the third qualifying round and left coach Hector Cuper predicting: "With the right mentality we can continue into the group stages of the competition – and for me the right mentality is to always be ready to face your opponent, no matter how strong or big they are."

Fifth in the Super League last season and Greek Cup runners-up, Aris' best previous showing in Europe was in the 1979-1980 UEFA Cup, when they reached the third round, beating Benfica and Perugia.

THE COACH

HECTOR CUPER (SINCE NOVEMBER 2009)

The Argentinian has huge experience, having coached Valencia and Internazionale, as well as being in charge of the Georgia national side.

KEY PLAYER

TONI CALVO

The Spaniard performed well in pre-season and is expected to be a key figure in Aris' future.

TACTICS

Cuper uses a 4-3-3 system with the midfield as a strong point, with Tunisia star Medhi Nafti, Colombia's Juan Toja and Calvo. Also expected to see action are Guatemala's leading international scorer, Carlos Ruiz Gutierez.

ASTON VILLA (ENG)

Wide man...Stewart Downing

VILLA were left in limbo at the start of the 2010-11 campaign following the dramatic resignation of Martin O'Neill. Relations between O'Neill and club owner Randy Lerner had deteriorated as they argued over transfer funds. In particular, there was a reported dispute over how much of the proceeds of James Milner's sale to Manchester City O'Neill would be allowed to spend.

Lerner has spent heavily since he acquired the club in 2006 but signs in the past 12 months are that he wants to scale back his investment. With no new signings, Ashley Young is also yet to commit to a new contract amid reports that he might follow Milner out of the club.

THE CARETAKER MANAGER

KEVIN MACDONALD (SINCE AUGUST 2010)

Assumed temporary control following O'Neill's resignation.

KEY PLAYER

STILIYAN PETROV

The Bulgarian prompts and guides the younger talent around him.

TACTICS

Villa's strength in attack lies in the aerial power of John Carew (or Emile Heskey) and the pace of Gabriel Agbonlahor and Ashley Young. Petrov takes charge of set-pieces, where Dunne and James Collins often threaten.

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ATLETICO MADRID (SPA)

Prolific...Forlan

VICTORY over Fulham in Hamburg in last season's Europa League Final ended Atletico's 14-year wait for a trophy and ensured much-needed stability. The key attacking quartet of Diego Forlan, Sergio Aguero, Simao and Jose Antonio Reyes are all still there, while coach Quique Sanchez Flores is strongly backed by a previously trigger-happy board.

Their ninth place in last season's Liga means Atletico will be one of the few teams to defend their title rather than make the step up to the Champions League. They will start as Europa League favourites, though their target will be a return to the Champions League through domestic league success.

THE COACH

QUIQUE SANCHEZ FLORES (SINCE OCTOBER 2009)
Ex-Valencia coach who took over at Atletico after Abel Resino's sacking.

KEY PLAYER

DIEGO FORLAN
A hugely prolific goalscorer for Atletico and, before that, Villarreal.

TACTICS

Atletico play 4-4-2, with Forlan and Aguero an exciting and prolific attacking partnership. New signings Fran Merida and Mario Suarez offer fresh alternatives in midfield.

AUSTRIA WIEN (AUT)

Bright prospect...Dragovic

IN the club's heyday – the 1970s and 80s – they won the Austrian Bundesliga eight times in 11 seasons and reached the Cup-winners Cup Final and the European Cup last four. The "Violets" were then taken over by billionaire Frank Stronach in 1999 and became known as FK Austria Memphis Magna, before reverting to their original name two years ago.

This season's preparations have been complicated by a transfer saga involving defender Aleksandar Dragovic, at 19 one of Europe's brightest young prospects, and an injury to playmaker Milenko Acimovic, who may retire.

THE COACH

KARL DAXBACHER (SINCE 2008)
Previously coach of LASK Linz, he played for Austria Vienna for 14 seasons between 1971 and 1985 – the club's most successful spell.

KEY PLAYER

ZLATKO JUNUZOVIC
Born in Bosnia, he was a member of the Austria side that finished fourth at the 2007 Under-20 World Cup.

TACTICS

Daxbacher prefers his side to line up in a 4-1-4-1 formation, though this occasionally changes to 4-2-3-1. In the absence of Acimovic, Junuzovic has become the key force in midfield.

AZ ALKMAAR (HOL)

Making up lost time...Marcellis

DESPITE the collapse of the DSB Bank, the forced departure of chairman and owner Dirk Scheringa, and the sacking of coach Ronald Koeman, AZ still managed to finish fifth last season.

The Alkmaar club will be aiming for a bright new start under Gertjan Verbeek, who steered unfancied Heracles to a miraculous sixth spot last term. Verbeek will get the chance and time to build a new team but, due to the financial situation, only after being forced to sell Mounir El Hamdaoui to Ajax and Moussa Dembele to Fulham. Keeper Sergio Romero may also be on his way out.

THE COACH

GERTJAN VERBEEK (SINCE APRIL 2010)
Known for his physical approach and his inflexibility, but knows how to gel an attractive team of young and talented players.

KEY PLAYER

DIRK MARCELLIS
Lost his place with both PSV and the national team and now wants to make up for lost time at AZ.

TACTICS

Operating as a team is AZ's biggest strength. They have no stars but midfielders Maarten Martens and Stijn Schaars offer the required experience. Up front, they will use inexperienced Brazilian Jonathas for now.

BATE BORISOV (BLS)

Back home...Rodionov (right)

DOMINANT domestically since 2006, BATE have won the Supreme League four times and are the only Belarus club to have qualified for the group stage of the Champions League. BATE have failed to repeat their 2008-09 heroics, though, crashing out in the third qualifying round for the past two seasons – this time around by 3-2 on aggregate to Danish champions Copenhagen.

Their squad has been reinforced by the signing 21-year-old Brazilian attacking midfielder Rennan Bressan from Belarus club Gomel and 23-year-old midfielder Edhar Alyakhnovich from Dinamo Brest.

THE COACH

VIKTOR GONCHARENKO (SINCE SEPTEMBER 2008)
A full-blooded BATE man, he had to retire at 25 due to serious injury. Six years later he became head coach.

KEY PLAYER

VITALI RODIONOV
Was loaned to German side Freiburg last year. Since returning he has forced his way into the national side.

TACTICS

In a 4-4-2 formation where the strongest link is the defensive line of Belarus internationals, Brazilian ace Bressan enhances the attacking potential and offers quality assistance to the strike pair of Kontsevoy and Rodionov.

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BAYER LEVERKUSEN (GER)

Experienced...Heynckes

THERE is no question about the Rhinelanders' abundance of youthful enthusiasm, spirit and attacking flair – but as events proved last season when Bayer faded away in the final furlongs of the Bundesliga race, they can exhibit a marked naivety too.

To remedy this, technical director Rudi Voller pulled off a major transfer coup by coaxing Germany captain Michael Ballack to return on a free from Chelsea. The old-guard alliance of Ballack, inexhaustible Finnish centre-back Sami Hyypia and defensive midfielder Simon Rolfes, together with the up-and-at-'em youngsters, could work wonders.

THE COACH

JUPP HEYNCKES (SINCE JULY 2009)
Came out of semi-retirement in April 2009 to look after Bayern when they sacked Jurgen Klinsmann and moved to Leverkusen three months later.

KEY PLAYER

STEFAN KIESSLING
Top scorer last term with 22 goals and a similar tally this time would push his international prospects.

TACTICS

Heynckes favours a fluid 4-2-2-2 with the emphasis on taking the initiative. In theory, his midfield has two central holders and two creators on the flanks, though Ballack will get more freedom to push on than at Chelsea.

BESIKTAS (TUR)

Newcomers...Quaresma and Hilbert

DESPITE bringing in Guti from Real Madrid, Ricardo Quaresma from Internazionale and Roberto Hilbert from Stuttgart, the Black and Whites are still keen to add to their squad – with president Yildirim Derimoren even proposing a bid for Manchester City's Brazil star Robinho.

Besiktas supporters are delighted with the club's ambitious strategy, and with the newcomers joining forces with old hands such as Rustu Recber and Nihat Kahveci, as well as with bright young talent Necip Uysal, this team could achieve some success.

THE COACH

BERND SCHUSTER (SINCE JUNE 2010)
With Real Madrid on his managerial CV, the former Germany international has already become a big favourite with the Turkish club's fans.

KEY PLAYER

RICARDO QUARESMA
Never really proved himself at Chelsea or Interazionale, but the former Porto player still has the ability to do something special.

TACTICS

Based on the foundations of a solid defence, Schuster's Besiktas will look to their creative midfielders to dominate and win matches.

BORUSSIA DORTMUND (GER)

Money well spent...Kagawa

A CREDITABLE fifth last season in the Bundesliga – their best domestic performance for seven years – and Dortmund will be banking on two factors to drive them on in Europe: their fanatical support at the 80,000-capacity Westfalenstadion home and the vibrancy and enthusiasm of their young team.

Extremely careful with their money these days after narrowly avoiding bankruptcy in 2005, they did not have a huge transfer budget this summer, but seem to have spent wisely on Poland striker Robert Lewandowski from Lech Poznan and Japan midfielder Shinji Kagawa from Cerezo Osaka.

THE COACH

JURGEN KLOPP (SINCE MAY 2008)
The charismatic boss is in his third season with Dortmund. Renowned for his exuberant goal celebrations and is a popular TV pundit.

KEY PLAYER

NURI SAHIN
Made his Dortmund first-team debut at just 16 in 2005.

TACTICS

Klopp's preferred formation is an attack-minded 4-2-3-1, relying on high energy and drive. Ball retention can be a problem, and he may consider a 4-4-2 in which the goal-hungry Lewandowski and Lucas Barrios collaborate.

BRONDBY (DEN)

The rock...Von Schlebrugge

THEY remain the most successful Danish club ever in European competition having enjoyed a brilliant run to the UEFA Cup semi-finals in 1991.

While nobody is expecting a repeat 20 years on, the current side has been thoroughly revitalised under coach Henrik Jensen and they should not be underestimated. After losing their first match of the season they responded with three straight wins and comfortably overcame Buducnost Podoriga, 3-1 on aggregate, in the Europa League third qualifying round.

THE COACH

HENRIK JENSEN (SINCE MARCH 2010)
A former Brondby player from the 1980s who played once for the national side, Jensen has stabilised the club after a period of turmoil under his predecessor, Kent Nielsen.

KEY PLAYER

MAX VON SCHLEBRUGGE
Captain and robust central defender, the Swedish international is the rock on which the team is built.

TACTICS

Brondby play a classic old-style 4-4-2, reliant on a strong back four and hard-working midfield. The main threats come from Gambia striker Ousman Jallow, and much is expected from young midfielder Jens Stryger Larsen.

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CELTIC (SCO)

Potent...Juarez

ANOTHER failure to make it to the Champions League group stage saw Celtic drop into the Europa League play-offs, but a summer spending spree means they should have a squad equipped to hold its own in Europe's second tier. However, the Champions League qualifiers against Braga showed it will take time to bed in the new signings.

Celtic look strong on the right, where South Korea full-back Cha Du-ri and Mexico midfielder Efrain Juarez should form a potent tandem. A lack of a European-quality striker and a wholly reliable goalkeeper are weaknesses that could be exposed against decent opposition.

THE COACH

NEIL LENNON (SINCE MARCH 2010)
The rookie boss is on a steep learning curve and the Europa League will be an intriguing test of his tactical nous.

KEY PLAYER

EFRAIN JUAREZ
The Mexico World Cup star has quickly established himself as a key figure on the right and should enjoy Europe.

TACTICS

Lennon has vowed to re-introduce a high-octane element into Celtic's performances. They have plenty of pace and quality in wide positions and will aim to make the most of the physical presence of their strikers.

CLUB BRUGGE (BLG)

Under fire...Koster

FIVE years have passed since FCB last scooped the Belgian league title and their last European semi-final was back in 1992. Despite finishing third in the domestic title race last term, four defeats in 10 play-off games revealed limitations and their start to this campaign has hardly been glorious, with crushing losses to Kortrijk and local rivals Cercle.

Crisis is in the air, with the media spreading stories of bad apples in the squad and poor preparation for the new season. Indeed, former Anderlecht and Mechelen coach Aad De Mos thinks that either coach Adrie Koster or director of sport Luc Devroe is in line to be fired.

THE COACH

ADRIE KOSTER (SINCE APRIL 2009)
The ex-Ajax first-team and academy boss has a reputation for audacious tactics honed at Dutch clubs such as Roda, Excelsior and RKC Waalwijk.

KEY PLAYER

VADIS ODJIDJA-OFOE
At 21, he is the undisputed master and commander of the Brugge midfield.

TACTICS

Coach Koster is keen to see more subtlety and invention from his charges this season. They have become less willing to play on the break and have acquired greater tactical flexibility: one moment in 4-2-3-1 mode, the next 4-3-3.

CSKA MOSCOW (RUS)

Return...Vagner Love

AFTER replacing Juande Ramos with Leonid Slutsky just 47 days after the Spaniard took over from Brazil legend Zico, the army team's owners still hanker for the 2003 to 2006 glory days when they won the league three times, the Russian Cup twice and the UEFA Cup once.

The July signings of Serbia winger Zoran Tosic from Manchester United and Ivory Coast striker Seydou Doumbia from Swiss side Young Boys, plus the return of Brazilian striker Vagner Love from spells with Palmeiras and Flamengo, makes CSKA's squad one of the most impressive in Russia.

THE COACH

LEONID SLUTSKY (SINCE OCTOBER 2009)
Dubbed "the Russian Mourinho", he is a media darling and highly advanced in terms of tactical theory.

KEY PLAYER

VAGNER LOVE
Celebrated his return to Russia by scoring a last-minute winner in the Moscow derby game against Spartak.

TACTICS

Every midfield slot is contested by two or even three players of almost the same level. The quick, inventive duo up front will earn numerous free-kicks – a real threat with an expert like Japan's Keisuke Honda on the firing range.

CSKA SOFIA (BUL)

Experienced...Yanchev

SUPPORTER protests against high ticket prices and calls for executive director Emil Kostadinov to quit have blighted CSKA's new season. Matters weren't helped by a 1-0 home defeat to arch-rivals Levski Sofia on the opening day and coach Pavel Dochev paid the price three games into the league campaign.

Things haven't been much better in Europe. Although they got past Northern Ireland's Cliftonville in the third qualifying round of the Europa League, CSKA were losing 1-0 in the away leg with five minutes to go before snatching a 2-1 win to go through 5-1 on aggregate.

THE COACH

GJORE JOVANOVSKI (SINCE AUGUST 2010)
A player with Vardar, Red Star and Samsunspor, he coached Macedonia from 2001 to 2002. Replaced Dochev after a poor start to this campaign.

KEY PLAYER

TODOR YANCHEV
The club's most experienced player and captain. Scores decisive goals.

TACTICS

Jovanovski will be looking to introduce some stability – the previous coach made numerous changes to his starting line-ups in an unsuccessful attempt to find a winning formula, though he wasn't helped by injuries.

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DEBRECEN (HUN)

Loyal...Herczeg

HAVING survived a big threat from Videoton to their domestic rule in May, the five-time league champions must now overcome the loss of key striker Gergely Rudolf to Genoa. His loss was all too apparent as poor finishing against Basle in Budapest saw "Loki" eliminated from the Champions League.

The railway workers' team includes a few new faces – notably former Ujpest forward Peter Kabat and Lithuania goalkeeper Mindaugas Malinauskas – but they have lost some of the stability that brought them so much domestic success and few see progress in Europe.

THE COACH

ANDRAS HERCZEG (SINCE 2007)
The loyal club servant's back-to-back title wins proved his worth as coach rather than back-room boy.

KEY PLAYER

ADAMO COULIBALY
The Paris-born Ivorian has notched a goal every other game and was on target twice in last year's Champions League campaign.

TACTICS

A set-in-stone 4-4-2 has Adam Komlosi leading a new-look back four that has yet to bed in. They will be without keeper Vukasin Poleksic and defender Norbert Meszaros following a UEFA ban over match-fixing activities.

DINAMO MINSK (BLS)

Attacking midfielder...Putsila

CHAMPIONS of the USSR in 1982, Minsk were the biggest Belarus club before the turn of the century and won the Supreme League title six times. They have since been usurped by BATE Borisov and were champions just once this decade, in 2004.

During this slump, notorious owner Yuri Chizh has fired 23 coaches since acquiring control in 2000. Last season was typical as Sergei Gurenko retired and replaced by Sergey Solodovnikov, who then made way for Vladimir Golmak.

Dinamo have strengthened their squad with the signing of defender Vitali Marakhovskiy from Lokomotiv Moscow and forward Ruslan Pimenov from Dynamo Moscow.

THE COACH

VLADIMIR GOLMAK (SINCE MAY 2010)
Won the double as a player with Slavia Mozyr in 1996. However, this is his first job in the hot seat.

KEY PLAYER

ANTON PUTSILA
One of the most promising attacking midfielders in the country.

TACTICS

The key roles belong to French defender Aurelien Montaroup, holding midfielder Syarhey Kislyak and creative attacking midfielder Putsila. Golmak prefers to stop the opposition from counter-attacking.

DINAMO ZAGREB (CRO)

Great awareness...Badelj

APPOINTED in May and a Croatian Super Cup winner two months later, coach Velimir Zajec was sacked in August after just eight competitive games in charge following Dinamo's elimination from the Champions League qualifiers by Moldovan side Sheriff on penalties.

Former Under-21 international striker Ante Rukavina joined the club in the summer, returning to Croatia from Panathinaikos, but Dinamo have yet to find a natural replacement for Mario Mandzukic, who left for Wolfsburg during the summer.

THE COACH

VAHID HALILHODZIC (SINCE AUGUST 2010)
Took charge following the dismissal of Velamir Zajec after just two months in the job.

KEY PLAYER

MILAN BADELJ
Young, talented midfielder who has great awareness, a strong shot from distance and is an excellent dribbler with the ball.

TACTICS

Brazilian playmaker Sammir dictates the play, along with Badelj. Dinamo's main worry is at the back where the defence is on the slow side. Mobility can also be a problem up front with Miroslav Slepicka.

DNEPR MOGILEV (BLS)

Determined...Maksim Karpovich (left)

A THIRD division side in the days of the Soviet Union, the bad times radically changed for Dnepr with the creation of the Belarus Premier League in 1992. The Riversiders were among the founders of the top division and finished runners-up in the inaugural season. Their best season came in 1998 when they won the title.

Last season Dnepr finished third and they have boosted their squad for this campaign by signing the experienced Ukrainian defender Andriy Raspopov from Granit and midfielder Vladimir Yurchenko from Russian top-flight side Saturn.

THE COACH

ANDREY SKARABAGATSKA (SINCE 2007)
Of Ukrainian descent, he was assistant at Dnepr for several years before getting the head coach's job.

KEY PLAYER

EDUARD ZHAWNERAW
Central defender signed last year from Savit Mogilev. Soon established himself as a good reader of the game and excellent tackler.

TACTICS

The team relies on the ability of keeper Ruslan Kapantsow, the presence of Zhawneraw in defence, the creativity of Dmytro Tereshchenko and Alyaksandr Bychanok, plus the goals of striker Ihar Zyankovich.

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DNIPRO DNIPROPETROVSK (UKR)

Newcomer...Lobzhanidze

DNIPRO were one of the best clubs in the USSR Supreme League in the 1980s, winning league titles in 1983 and 1988, the Soviet Cup in 1989, and the USSR Federation Cup in 1986 and 1989. But since the formation of the Ukrainian Premier League they haven't won a single trophy, being labelled under-achievers in finishing runners-up once and third five times. They have also reached and lost three Ukraine Cup Finals.

The "Blue and Whites" boast one of the best stadiums in Ukraine – the Dnipro Arena, built in 2008. This summer they signed Georgia defender Ucha Lobzhanidze from Zestaponi and midfielder Valeriy Fedorchuk from FC Lviv.

THE COACH

VOLODYMYR BEZSONOV (SINCE 2008)
Ex-Dynamo Kyiv star who is the former coach of Turkmenistan.

KEY PLAYER

YEVHEN KONOPLYANKA
Deemed the most talented midfielder in the Ukraine Premier League.

TACTICS

Bezsonov likes to play 4-4-1-1, with a strong midfield and inventive wingers in Osmar Ferreyra from Argentina and Yevhen Konoplyanka. Maksym Kalynychenko's crosses to Yevhen Seleznyov are a threat.

DUNDEE UNITED (SCO)

Reluctant hero...Houston

LAST season's Scottish Cup win and third-place finish in the league has raised expectations at Tannadice. And, if anything, their brand of football, based on quick passing and possession, should be even better suited to Europe.

Peter Houston has a squad full of attacking talent and has managed to fend off interest from English clubs in several of his key players. But, following the retirement of Lee Wilkie and Andy Webster's return to Rangers, United look short in defence, to the extent that Houston has had to try out striker Andis Shala as makeshift centre-back.

THE COACH

PETER HOUSTON (SINCE DECEMBER 2009)
The reluctant hero was assistant to the much lauded Craig Levein and has made United even better still.

KEY PLAYER

MORGARO GOMIS
The Senegalese playmaker has blossomed with United and is often at the heart their most incisive moves.

TACTICS

Houston's well-oiled unit sees much of the play directed through skilful midfield duo Gomis and Prince Buaban. Their ability to keep possession could see them fare well in European competition.

ELFSBORG (SWE)

Summer arrival...Christiansen

SINCE claiming the Allsvenskan title back in 2005, the small-town club from Boras in the south of Sweden have not once failed to finish in the top four, playing the most attractive football in the country.

They are again among the frontrunners, but would probably be even higher if just slightly more efficient at turning possession into goals. They look all the better for the summer arrival of Denmark keeper Jesper Christiansen from Copenhagen, full-back Andreas Klarstrom from Esbjerg and central defender Jon Jonsson from Brondby, though the sale of winger Emir Bajrami to Twente was clearly the last thing they needed.

THE COACH

MAGNUS HAGLUND (SINCE 2004)
Highly competent strategist who is still going strong.

KEY PLAYER

DENNI AVDIC
Born in Bosnia but raised in Sweden, he is a good bet to be the top scorer in the domestic league this year.

TACTICS

Also able to switch to a 4-3-3 or 4-1-3-2 during a game, their strength is in midfield, where Sweden's Anders Svensson calls the shots. Key to their plans are the late runs into the box and the finishing of Denni Avdic.

FENERBAHCE (TUR)

Midfield cog...Emre

DEFEAT against Young Boys in the Champions League, in the wake of Christoph Daum's exit as coach, meant a difficult start to the season for Fener – a situation that was not helped by the board's hesitancy to sign new players.

The arrival of Slovakia midfielder Miroslav Stoch from Chelsea has since been followed by the arrival of Issiar Dia from Nancy, Galatasaray loanee Caner Erkin and Marseille's Mamadou Niang. While this may have appeased the fans for a while, they will be expecting some silverware this season.

THE COACH

AYKUT KOCAMAN (SINCE JUNE 2010)
General manager last season, he is not that popular with supporters but has the backing of club president Aziz Yildirim and must try to stamp his mark on the team quickly.

KEY PLAYER

MAMADOU NIANG
Last season's top scorer in France wasn't keen on moving to Turkey but couldn't refuse the money on offer.

TACTICS

Emre Belozoglu and Alex are at the heart of a crowded midfield that may be given more width with the arrival of Dia and Stoch. Their defence is very strong, with Diego Lugano sweeping behind strongman Bilica.

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FEYENOORD (HOL)

Talented...Fer (right)

RUNNERS-UP in the national cup and fourth in the league was the best Feyenoord could do last term. With no money to spend, veterans Giovanni Van Bronckhorst and Roy Makaay retired, and talents such as Jonathan De Guzman gone, this season will be an even more difficult one for the Rotterdam club. In fact, this could be their last European campaign for the next few years.

On the bright side, talented youngsters such as Leroy Fer, Luc Castaignos, Ramon Van Haaren, Georginio Wijnaldum and Stefan De Vrij should gain some valuable European experience.

THE COACH

MARIO BEEN (SINCE JANUARY 2009)
Had his dream come true last year, returning to the club he served as a player, but faces a difficult season.

KEY PLAYER

RON VLAAR
Made an impressive return after a two-and-a-half year struggle with injuries. Just missed out on Holland's successful World Cup squad.

TACTICS

In a traditional 4-3-3, veteran Jon Dahl Tomasson drops to midfield. While still looking for a striker, Fedor Smolov, who is on loan from Dynamo Moscow, should cover. Karim El Ahmadi and Fer keep the midfield balanced.

GALATASARAY (TUR)

On target...Kewell (right)

STRUGGLING after the glory years of winning the UEFA Cup and the Super Cup in 2000, the Lions lack continuity and remain in need of another midfielder, a decent goalkeeper and a top striker.

Having begun the season with a 2-1 defeat away to Sivasspor, coach Frank Rijkaard says that he needs new signings. If they are not forthcoming, Gala's season – not to mention the Dutchman's – could be over before it has even started.

THE COACH

FRANK RIJKAARD (SINCE JUNE 2009)
After a poor season last time out, he is under pressure from the club's expectant fans.

KEY PLAYER

ARDA TURAN
Became captain last season aged 22 and is being watched by many of Europe's top teams. Although he lacks experience, he has the potential to be a real leader.

TACTICS

Gala's strong midfield is an advantage and if Arda and Harry Kewell are on form, they have the ability to impress. They are, however, sometimes over-reliant on those two.

GENK (BLG)

Improved morale...Joao Carlos (left)

CHANGES to the Belgian league structure were the making of Genk last term, achieving a so-so eighth spot in the regular season, but doing spectacularly in the Europa League play-offs thanks to victories over Standard Liege, Germinal Beerschot, Charleroi and, in the Final, Westerlo.

Coach Franky Vercauteren, who replaced Hein Vanhaezebrouck, had swiftly looked to resolve shattered squad morale and alter the joyless, pedestrian style of football.

Apart from striker Jelle Vossen, back at the Cristal Arena after a loan spell at Cercle Bruges, their line-up has altered little over the summer.

THE COACH

FRANKY VERCAUTEREN (SINCE DECEMBER 2009)
An icon in these parts as a left-sided midfielder for Anderlecht and the *Diables Rouges*.

KEY PLAYER

KEVIN DE BRUYNE
Teenage attacking midfielder deemed the most exciting Belgian prospect since Enzo Scifo 25 years ago.

TACTICS

On his arrival the coach ditched the dysfunctional three-man back-line and demanded much more movement in the middle of the park. He abhors excessive lateral passing and likes his team to get the ball forward early.

GENT (BLG)

Exuberant...El Ghanassy

LAST season was a vintage one for the Buffalos, performing splendidly to finish runners-up in the domestic championship and also claiming the Belgian Cup for only the third time.

Then came a bombshell as coach Michel Preud'homme opted to take over from Steve McClaren at the newly crowned Dutch champions, Twente. Hardly the ideal scenario for club president Ivan De Witte, but he believes he has found a good replacement in Zulte Waregem boss Francky Dury.

Shame that Dury is stepping into a dressing room that has been turned sour by personality clashes and players angling for transfers.

THE COACH

FRANCKY DURY (SINCE MAY 2010)
Ex-police inspector who guided Waregem from the Belgian third tier to the top flight in just four years.

KEY PLAYER

YASSINE EL GHANASSY
Instinctive, exuberant Belgium-born Morocco Under-20 attacking midfielder or front runner.

TACTICS

Whether 4-2-3-1 or 4-5-1, Dury's teams always work as one, with everyone defending or attacking together. Defence, midfield and attack are all very compact, so it's easy to go from ball winning to lightning-fast counter-attacks.

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GETAFE (SPA)

Forward thinking...Parejo

MICHEL'S Getafe were one of the most attractive teams in Spain last season, but they have lost Pedro Leon to Real Madrid and Roberto Soldado to Valencia – their finest assist provider and top scorer respectively – this summer.

A clutch of new signings, including striker Adrian Colunga, Javier Arizmendi and Pedro Mosquera, should endure another impressive campaign on a limited budget. However, whether that domestic success can extend to Europe remains to be seem.

THE COACH

MICHEL (SINCE APRIL 2009)
Former Real Madrid midfielder who has transformed Getafe since replacing Victor Munoz.

KEY PLAYER

DANI PAREJO
The former Real Madrid starlet who excelled at Getafe last season after a loan spell in England at second-tier side QPR.

TACTICS

Getafe play an attack-orientated 4-2-3-1 with central midfielders Derek Boateng and Parejo (or new signing Borja) keen to get forward. Colunga is the lone striker, with Arizmendi as the alternative.

GRASSHOPPER (SWI)

In demand...Salatic

THE Zurich-based club made a miserable start to the Swiss league last season, finding themselves near the bottom of the table in the early stages, before they climbed to third and went straight into the final qualifying round of this term's Europa League.

At present the club are without their own stadium. The Hardturm was demolished in 2007 and its planned replacement, the Stadion Zurich, has been delayed, forcing Grasshopper to share the Letzigrund with rivals FC Zurich.

THE COACH

CIRIACO SFORZA (SINCE JUNE 2009)
Former Switzerland international midfielder who had three stints with Kaiserslautern, two with Bayern Munich and one with Internazionale. Began coaching with Lucerne.

KEY PLAYER

VERO SALATIC
Has played for Switzerland at various age levels, turning down approaches to play for Bosnia where he was born.

TACTICS

Grasshopper usually employ a 4-1-4-1 formation with Salatic playing in front of the defence and Vincenzo Rennella as the lone striker. Rennella can also drop back to midfield with Silas replacing him in attack.

GYOR (HUN)

Attacking...Linas Pilibaitis (left)

COACH Attila Pinter rushed to the dressing room immediately after the shock penalty shoot-out win over Montpellier in the Europa League as he didn't want his celebrating players to see him crying.

This hotch-potch squad of Africans, ex-Yugoslavs and a handful of Hungarians had come together over the course of 120 minutes to reverse a home first-leg defeat – and earned their reward with Tibor Tokody's decisive penalty. They began their domestic season this term with a hard-fought draw at Ujpest followed by a tired, unconvincing win over Siofok.

THE COACH

ATTILA PINTER (SINCE 2009)
Ex-Hungary defender who motivated Ferencvaros to win their last league title in 2004, and Sopron the Hungarian Cup the following year.

KEY PLAYER

MIHAI NICOREC
Former Rapid Bucharest striker who now plays more of an attacking midfield role.

TACTICS

Pinter must encourage a team of mainly foreigners to fight for the shirt. As such, he often sticks to a simple 4-4-2 in which every man knows his job – with Mihai Nicorec as the lynchpin between midfield and attack.

HAJDUK SPLIT (CRO)

Dribbler...Ibricic

CELEBRATING their centenary in February, Hajduk have made a decent start to the new season despite losing Romania striker Florin Cernat to Karabukspor of Turkey and Bosnia defender Boris Pandza to Belgian side Mechelen during the close season.

With the club's budget halved this season they are having to rely on a young squad and must make do without the injured Marin Ljubicic and Marijan Buljat.

THE COACH

STANKO POKLEPOVIC (SINCE FEBRUARY 2010)
The most experienced coach in Croatia, he is a wise tactician who knows how to launch the careers of young players.

KEY PLAYER

SENIJAD IBRICIC
The Bosnia midfielder is a good dribbler who also scores plenty of goals.

TACTICS

Highly adventurous, Hajduk often play in effect with four attackers and full-backs Mirko Oremuz and Ivan Strinic in support. But the team can defend as well, and away from home front runner Ante Vukusic is often sacrificed.

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HJK HELSINKI (FIN)

Crucial...Wallen

HJK are Finland's biggest club in terms of history, honours, finances and potential. This team is not in the same class as the one that got to the Champions League group stages in 1998-99, but that campaign meant they have achieved more than any currently operational Finnish club in Europe – as Kuusysi, who reached the European Cup quarter-finals in 1986, went bankrupt in 1996.

Expectations are low though, as the suspension of midfield fulcrum Medo makes progress unlikely. However, success against a big club will see wild celebrations and acres of media coverage.

THE COACH

ANTTI MUURINEN (SINCE 2007)
A mild-mannered, likeable coach whose teams were rather cautious until the arrival of his attack-minded assistant Juha Rantala this year.

KEY PLAYER

VILLE WALLEN
One of the top goalkeepers in Finland, his performance will be crucial if HJK are to survive in Europe.

TACTICS

HJK's attacks tend to go via Jarno Parikka, slightly withdrawn behind either Juho Makela or Akseli Pelvas. Dawda Bah and full-back Rafinha provide options on the flanks. Medo often starts – and finishes – their counter-attacks.

JUVENTUS (ITA)

Central striker...Amauri

IT'S been all change at Juventus, with new coach Gigi Delneri and plenty of new faces, the latest being Serbia winger Milos Krasic from CSKA Moscow. The new-look side thrashed Shamrock Rovers in the preliminary round and must be among the favourites to reach the final stages of the competition.

However, reclaiming a Champions League place is likely to be the priority for the "Old Lady" this season and any progress in Europe will be seen as a bonus.

Goalkeeper Gigi Buffon will miss the opening months of the season, while Brazilian midfielder Diego has been linked with a return to Germany, with Wolfsburg keen to sign him.

THE COACH

GIGI DELNERI (SINCE JUNE 2010)
Hardened Serie A campaigner who made his name at Chievo.

KEY PLAYER

AMAURI
The Brazil-born striker is the man Juve look to for goals.

TACTICS

A revamped line-up is likely to adopt a traditional 4-4-2, with Amauri the central striker and Diego in an advanced midfield role. Krasic could play further forward, with Davide Lanzafame coming in on the right of midfield.

KARPATY LVIV (UKR)

Much travelled...Batista

NAMED after a region near the Carpathian mountains, Karpaty caused a sensation in Soviet football when they won the USSR Cup in 1969 – the only club from a lower division ever to achieve such a feat.

Among the founders of the Ukraine elite division, they were relegated in 2004 but they won the second-tier title the following term. They have strengthened their squad by signing experienced goalkeeper Vitaliy Rudenko from Chornomorets, the twins Hryhoriy and Borys Baranets from FC Lviv and Brazilian midfielders Danilo Avelar and Nenu on loan from Rio Clara.

THE COACH

OLEH KONONOV (SINCE JUNE 2008)
Russian coach who has also worked with Belarusian and Moldovan clubs. Voted Belarus player of the season in 1998 with Torpedo Minsk.

KEY PLAYER

WILLIAM BATISTA
Much travelled Brazilian striker who has settled well at Karpaty. Nearly moved to Dynamo Kyiv in 2007.

TACTICS

In a defensive-minded system Batista is up front, while Denys Kozhanov, Ihor Khudobyak and Samson Godvin reign in midfield. In defence, Ukraine international Artem Fedetskyi on loan from Shakhtar Donetsk is key.

LAUSANNE-SPORT (SWI)

Captain...Celestini (left)

CURRENTLY playing in the Swiss second tier, the seven-times league champions qualified for the Europa League by virtue of reaching the Swiss Cup Final, where they lost to league winners Basle 6-0.

Lausanne have been playing lower-league football since 2001 and at one stage dropped to the fourth tier and were declared bankrupt. They have past European experience and reached the third round of the old UEFA Cup in 2000-01, losing 7-4 on aggregate to Nantes. They have signed nine new players for this season and Martin Rueda has replaced Arpad Soos as coach.

THE COACH

MARTIN RUEDA (SINCE JULY 2010)
A member of Switzerland's 1994 World Cup squad, he has previously coached Wohlen, Aarau, Winterthur and Grasshopper's under-21 side.

KEY PLAYER

FABIO CELESTINI
Captain and midfielder who is in his second spell with the club. He has won 35 caps for Switzerland.

TACTICS

Lausanne play in a 4-4-2 formation with Celestini and Brazilian forward Silvio their most important players. Brazilian midfielder Rodrigo Tosi has a knack of coming on as substitute and scoring important goals.

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LECH POZNAN (POL)

Creative talent...Peszko

WON their sixth Polish title last season, but the first since 1993. Their biggest problem will be filling the gap left by striker Robert Lewandowski, now with Borussia Dortmund. Their dream of reaching the group stage of the Champions League was ended by Sparta Prague who beat them 2-0 on aggregate in the third qualifying round.

After a merger with Amica Wronki in 2006, they became a well-structured club with the highest league attendance in the country. As of September their redeveloped Stadion Miejski will be the biggest club ground in Poland with a capacity of 44,000.

THE COACH

JACEK ZIELINSKI (SINCE JUNE 2009)
Confirmed his ability by winning the Polish championship in his first year at the club.

KEY PLAYER

SLAWOMIR PESZKO
Quick winger who is a creative talent – though he often finds himself in trouble with referees.

TACTICS

Zielinski prefers 4-5-1, relying on the strength and experience of stoppers Bartosz Bosacki and Manuel Arboleda. Wingers Peszko and Sergey Krivets are the main attacking outlets, along with striker Artur Wichniarek.

LEVSKI SOFIA (BUL)

First goal...Yovov

FOR the third time in their history Levski will meet a Swedish team in Europe – AIK of Stockholm stand between Yasen Petrov's side and a place in the group stage.

The omens are good for the side that finished third in the Bulgarian league last term. Having beaten Djurgardens 7-2 on aggregate when making their debut in the European Cup in 1965, Levski beat Kalmar 5-2 on aggregate in the previous round of this season's competition with Ismail Isa scoring twice in injury time in the second leg.

THE COACH

YASEN PETROV (SINCE MAY 2010)
Had a great start to his career as Levski coach, beating rivals CSKA on the opening day of the domestic season and getting past Dundalk and Kalmar in Europe.

KEY PLAYER

GARRA DEMBELE
French forward who arrived from Lokomotiv Plovdiv this season. Works the whole pitch and helps out in defence and midfield.

TACTICS

Levski usually adopt a tactical 4-2-3-1 line-up, with all of their midfielders primed to join Dembele in attack. Enigmatic midfielder Hristo Yovov scored his side's first goal of the season in the 6-0 trouncing of Dundalk.

LITEX LOVECH (BUL)

Up front...Wilfred Niflor

ALTHOUGH he led the club to the Bulgarian championship last season, elimination from the qualifying stage of the Champions League cost coach Angel Chervenkov his job.

Having seen off Montenegro's Rudar, Chervenkov's side drew 1-1 at home to Zilina of Slovakia. They then went ahead in the return leg, before a red card for Ivelin Popov saw the team fall apart. The 3-1 defeat resulted in owner Grisha Ganchev replacing Chervenkov with Petko Petkov.

THE COACH

PETKO PETKOV (SINCE AUGUST 2010)
The former Bulgaria international was promoted from his post as youth team coach. His assistant is former first-team boss Ferario Spasov.

KEY PLAYER

IVELIN POPOV
The club captain earned himself a red card against Zilina and must serve a suspension. Has had talks with Blackburn Rovers, so might yet move to England.

TACTICS

Following the defeat in Slovakia, Brazilian goalkeeper Rodrigo Galatto quit the club to join Spanish side Malaga and he will be replaced by Uros Golubovic. The suspended Popov will be much harder to replace up front.

LILLE (FRA)

Talented...Hazard

RUDI GARCIA'S side missed out on Champions League football by a single point last term, but they can take pride in the manner in which they grabbed a Europa League spot, playing with tenacity, a never-say-die attitude and a style that was particularly easy on the eye. All this was after an awful start to the season that saw them notch just one win in their first seven games.

With talented players at their disposal, such as Belgium starlet Eden Hazard and the Ivory Coast's Gervinho, don't be surprised if Lille give one or two of the competition's bigger names a run for their money.

THE COACH

RUDI GARCIA (SINCE JUNE 2008)
After a sticky start he's put together a side that forges top individual talent with an admirable collective spirit.

KEY PLAYER

EDEN HAZARD
The ridiculously talented 19-year-old has been regularly touted as leaving for one of Europe's giants. Should enjoy the Europa League stage.

TACTICS

Garcia favours a 4-3-3 line-up with an emphasis on pressing high up the pitch and keeping the ball moving when in possession. The side is virtually identical to last season, so everyone knows his job inside out.

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LIVERPOOL (ENG)

Driving force...Gerrard

NEW boss Roy Hodgson achieved great success with Fulham in last season's competition but he has not been hired to guide Liverpool to the Europa League Final. His priority is a top-four finish and a Champions League return, and all the signs suggest Hodgson will stick with a first-choice line-up for the league and may rotate his side in Europe.

Despite financial restrictions, his transfer dealings have been impressive, bringing in Joe Cole on a free from Chelsea and Denmark midfielder Christian Poulsen from Juventus. Persuading the talismanic Steven Gerrard and Fernando Torres to remain at Anfield was also a great piece of business.

THE COACH

ROY HODGSON (SINCE JULY 2010)
Hugely respected in Europe, he is Liverpool's ninth manager in 50 years – the previous eight all won trophies.

KEY PLAYER

STEVEN GERRARD
The captain is set to see out his career at Anfield after insisting he will stay.

TACTICS

Hodgson's common-sense approach will see Liverpool well organised and the early signs are that Cole could play a central role, with Gerrard on the right of an attacking midfield trio and Torres as lone striker.

LOKOMOTIV MOSCOW (RUS)

Shooting ability...Aliyev

THE "fifth wheel" in the cart of the Moscow clubs during Soviet times, Loko became a true force by winning the Russian Premier League in 2002 and 2004. UEFA Cup semi-finalists in 1998 and 1999, they also proved themselves in the European arena and built the country's most modern football stadium.

But, having built up a big circle of predominately younger supporters, recent performances have been far from good. Desperately looking for a true playmaker, coach Yuri Semin brought back club legend Dmitri Loskov, who'd spent two years with Saturn Moscow Oblast. However, the 36-year-old's current form does not warrant a starting place.

THE COACH

YURI SEMIN (SINCE MAY 2009)
Left Loko in 2005 to become national coach and returned to the club after a spell with Dynamo Kyiv.

KEY PLAYER

OLEKSANDR ALIYEV
Scored 11 goals in the first half of this year's Russian Premier League.

TACTICS

Without a true playmaker, Loko look to the outstanding shooting ability of ex-Dynamo Kyiv midfielder Aliyev. Former prolific international striker Dmitri Sychev can be dangerous if given effective support from midfield.

MACCABI TEL AVIV (ISR)

Head first...Alfred Baning (left)

IN an audacious bid to shine in Europe and also win only their second domestic title in 15 years, Maccabi's owner Mitch Goldhar spent with abandon in the summer, recruiting no fewer than 11 new players – a roll call that includes goalscoring Bosnia midfielder Haris Medunjanin, bought from Valladolid for £1.9million, and the Argentina-born Israel striker Roberto Colautti from Borussia Monchengladbach.

New coach Yossi Mizrahi will not find it easy to fuse the new boys into an effective whole and his task was rendered more problematic when new Brazilian centre-back Nivaldo, another ex-Valladolid man, injured his knee just after arriving.

THE COACH

YOSSI MIZRAHI (SINCE JUNE 2010)
Former Israel goalkeeper and Avram Grant's aide in the 2004 European Championship qualifying campaign.

KEY PLAYER

HARIS MEDUNJANIN
Classy left-footed attacking midfielder with a nose for goal.

TACTICS

Like many other coaches these days, Mizrahi has converted to 4-2-3-1 as a likely default formation at home. For potentially awkward away games, they could switch to a triple centre-back set-up in a 5-3-2.

MANCHESTER CITY (ENG)

Energetic...Tevez

CITY single-handedly kept the European transfer market afloat this summer, spending well over £120million on new players and giving Roberto Mancini plenty of selection headaches in the process.

The Italian has two or more top players for each position and only three – keeper Joe Hart, defender Micah Richards and midfielder Michael Johnson – were at the club when it was taken over by the Abu Dhabi group of billionaire investors in August 2008.

Although the Premier League is City's priority, the Europa League may prove useful in allowing Mancini to rotate his expensive squad.

THE COACH

ROBERTO MANCINI (SINCE DECEMBER 2009)
The Italian will have a tough job keeping all his players happy.

KEY PLAYER

CARLOS TEVEZ
The energetic Argentinian striker soon won over the fans after his 2009 move from Manchester United.

TACTICS

Mancini has a wealth of options in every position, starting in goal with Hart and Shay Given right through to latest midfield acquisition James Milner from Aston Villa and striker Mario Balotelli from Inter.

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MARIBOR (SLN)

Fans' favourite...Tavares

LAST season's league runners-up and Slovene Cup winners will hope the atmosphere at their Ljudski vrt stadium, the 12,000-capacity "Temple of Football" which is also home to the national team, will help to give them a lift when most needed – like in the 3-0 rout of Hibernian in the third qualifying round of this term's Europa League.

It is in this hotbed of Slovene football – Maribor were surprise debutants in the Champions League group stage a decade ago – that national coach Matjaz Kek and many of the 2010 World Cup squad started out in their careers.

THE COACH

DARKO MILANIC (SINCE 2008)
Learned his trade as assistant coach at Sturm Graz then took charge at Maribor, working in tandem with former national star Zlatko Zahovic.

KEY PLAYER

MARCOS TAVARES
The prolific Brazilian striker quickly became a fans' favourite – they love his swift, technical skills.

TACTICS

In a fluid 4-4-2, Ales Mejac and Dejan Mezga work the right flank, and Mitja Viler and Josip Ilicic on the left, and the ball is moved swiftly to striker Tavares. There is no starting spot for World Cup defender Elvedin Dzinic.

MARITIMO (POR)

Brazilian flair...Robson

AFTER coming fifth last season to equal their best-ever finish in the Portuguese league, Maritimo are playing in Europe for the seventh time in their history.

As Madeira's largest team they enjoy most of the support on the island and the intense atmosphere at their home stadium has inspired some famous victories, including UEFA Cup wins against Leeds United and Rangers.

With a team comprised mostly of Brazilians, there is no lack of flair in a side that is well organised by Dutch coach Mitchell Van der Gaag.

THE COACH

MITCHELL VAN DER GAAG (SINCE SEPTEMBER 2009)
As a central defender he spent five successful seasons at Maritimo. Led the club to an impressive fifth place in his first season as coach.

KEY PLAYER

BRIGUEL
An icon on the island of Madeira, the 31-year-old captain has been at Maritimo all his career.

TACTICS

Maritimo relies on a counter-attacking 4-3-3 formation with a couple of speedy wingers feeding striker Djalma. They play a short-passing game which is highly effective when their creative players are on form.

METALIST KHARKIV (UKR)

Ruptured Achilles...Horyainov

BILLIONAIRE owner Oleksandr Yaroslavsky invested heavily in the squad this summer – they have finished third in the league behind Shakhtar Donetsk and Kyiv Dynamo for the past four seasons – with the signings of Argentina left-back Cristian Villagra from River Plate and Brazilian attacking midfielder Cleiton Xavier from Palmeiras.

But pre-season hopes have been dented after first-choice keeper and skipper Oleksandr Horyainov ruptured his Achilles and dressing room unrest resulted in the Brazilian forward Jaja Coelho moving to Turkish side Trabzonspor.

THE COACH

MYRON MARKEVYCH (SINCE 2005)
Combines his role with leading the Ukraine national team. Has failed to win a single trophy in his 26 years as a coach.

KEY PLAYER

CLEITON XAVIER
Signed by Metalist after two outstanding seasons at Palmeiras. Possesses a fierce long-range shot.

TACTICS

Markevych prefers a physical style, typified by Edmar and Ukraine internationals Oleh Shelayev and Serhiy Valyayev. The invention comes from Cleiton Xavier. Maksym Startsev, signed from Tavriya, takes over in goal.

MOTHERWELL (SCO)

Record goalscorer...Murphy (left)

FORMER Scotland manager Craig Brown has added defensive solidity to a team that has shown itself capable of bright football over the past few seasons.

A 3-0 blitzing of Norwegian Cup winners Aalesund at Fir Park in the third qualifying round showed Brown's side have momentum and confidence and, if their thin squad remains injury-free, reaching the group stages is a realistic goal. As an added incentive to progress, Brown has been told that he must deliver a good Europa League run in order to sign further players.

THE COACH

CRAIG BROWN (SINCE DECEMBER 2009)
Brown has given Motherwell a new lease of life with his philosophy of "entertaining without taking unnecessary risks at the back".

KEY PLAYER

JAMIE MURPHY
The Scotland Under-21 forward became his club's record European goalscorer in the qualifying rounds.

TACTICS

Defensively solid – Brown has turned Motherwell into the SPL's clean-sheet specialists – and extremely effective on the counter-attack, they look to press opponents high up the pitch and exploit set-pieces.

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NAPOLI (ITA)

Danger...Lavezzi

NAPOLI continue to express their ambition through the transfer market with some big-name signings. This summer's new arrivals included Uruguay's World Cup striker Edinson Cavani on loan from Palermo and left-back Andrea Dossena from Liverpool.

Alongside Cavani's compatriot Walter Gargano, Slovak star Marek Hamsik, striker Fabio Quagliarella and Argentinian Ezeguiel Lavezzi, Napoli have several outstanding performers and will be a match for most Europa League opponents. However, their priority this season will be to push on and improve on last season's excellent sixth-place finish in Serie A.

THE COACH

WALTER MAZZARRI (SINCE JUNE 2009)
Former journeyman midfielder who made his coaching name at Reggina and Sampdoria.

KEY PLAYER

MAREK HAMSIK
The dynamic midfielder enhanced his growing reputation with an excellent World Cup.

TACTICS

Mazzari favours an unusual formation, with a three-man defensive line and two secondary strikers, usually Hamsik and Lavezzi, behind a single target man, Quagliarella or Cavani.

ODENSE (DEN)

Top scorer...Utaka

HAVE had a lean spell in European competition since what is known in Denmark as the "Miracle of Madrid" when OB won 2-0 away to Real Madrid to reach the quarter-finals of the 1994-95 UEFA Cup.

In the last two seasons they have lost in Europa League qualifying to Genoa and Aston Villa, but ambition is higher this time. Former Manchester United goalkeeper Roy Carroll gives them security at the back, along with the veteran defender Thomas Helveg, who played in Italy for 10 years.

THE COACH

LARS OLSEN (SINCE JULY 2007)
Was captain of Denmark's Euro 92-winning side and skipper of the Brondby side that reached the 1991 UEFA Cup semi-finals.

KEY PLAYER

PETER UTAKA
The Nigerian striker was top scorer in the Superliga last season and made his international debut in March.

TACTICS

Although they are flexible, the team's basic model is 4-4-2, with wide men Rurik Gislason and Johan Absalonsen playing key roles in maintaining the shape of the side. Brazilian midfielder Caca pulls the strings.

OMONIA (CYP)

Arrival...Lua Lua

SINCE storming to the Cypriot league title in May – their first crown in seven years – Omonia have not been resting on their laurels and club chairman Miltiades Neophytou has been waving the cheque book as if there was no tomorrow.

Among those arriving are former Newcastle United and Olympiakos forward Lomana Lua Lua, young Apollon winger Andreas Avraam and a trio of Spaniards: midfielder Jose Manuel Rueda and left-back Victor Espasandin from Barcelona B, plus ex-Recreativo Huelva central defender Iago Bouzon. However, finding the right balance between the imports and local stalwarts such as skipper Elias Charalambous and wide-man Stathis Aloneftis will not be an easy trick to pull off.

THE COACH

TAKIS LEMONIS (SINCE MARCH 2009)
Formerly at Greek side Olympiakos, where he delivered four titles.

KEY PLAYER

GEORGIOS EFREM
Young right-winger, once of the Arsenal academy and then Rangers.

TACTICS

Lemonis has a reputation for being rather conservative, never happier than when ordering his side to soak up pressure. Paradoxically he does appreciate wing-play and will often use two classical practitioners of the art.

PALERMO (ITA)

Replacement...Maccarone

THIS summer, Palermo lost several of the players who played a key role in last season's impressive fifth-placed finish in Serie A.

The arrival of former Middlesbrough striker Massimo Maccarone from Siena is unlikely to compensate for the loss of Edinson Cavani to Napoli, while the departure of highly rated Denmark defender Simon Kjaer to Wolfsburg was a major blow. Nevertheless, coach Delio Rossi is used to working with limited resources and can call on outstanding young Argentina midfielder Javier Pastore.

THE COACH

DELIO ROSSI (SINCE NOVEMBER 2009)
Experienced operator who did well on a tight budget at Lazio and steered Palermo to the top-five last season.

KEY PLAYER

JAVIER PASTORE
Argentina World Cup midfielder who is nicknamed "*El Flaco*" (the skinny one).

TACTICS

Pastore is the main man in a 4-3-1-2 formation, with Maccarone and Abel Hernandez as willing front runners. Experienced former Italy international Fabio Liverani anchors the midfield.

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PAOK (GRE)

Combative...Vitolo

THE firing of Italian coach Mario Beretta after just a month in the job, and his replacement with the relatively unknown Pavlos Dermitzakis, does not seem to have had much of an effect on the Salonica club, who failed to get past Ajax in the third qualifying round of this season's Champions League – going out on away goals after leaking three in seven minutes at home.

"We had some problems in defence against Ajax and are looking to improve there," says Dermitzakis. "We must look ahead, correct our mistakes and improve."

THE COACH

PAVLOS DERMITZAKIS (SINCE JULY 2010)
A surprise choice, but the 41-year-old has gained the respect of the players who have performed well for him.

KEY PLAYER

DIMITRIS SALPIGIDIS
The national team striker, back after four seasons with Panathinaikos and should give PAOK a big boost up front.

TACTICS

The 4-4-2 line-up is based on a solid defence: Croatian keeper Dario Kresic, Tunisia right-back Anis Boussaidi, Poland's Miroslaw Sznaucner, veteran Italian centre-back Bruno Cirillo and Chile's Pablo Contreras.

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN (FRA)

Good business...Bodmer

PSG finished a lamentable 13th in Ligue 1 last season and only saved face by qualifying for the Europa League thanks to victory in the French Cup Final in typically scruffy style with a 1-0 win over Monaco in extra time.

Antoine Kombouare remains in charge, offering some much-needed stability. On the playing side there has been limited transfer activity in the close season, but Kombouare did pull off what look like a couple of good bits of business in signing midfielders Mathieu Bodmer from Lyon and Nene from Monaco.

THE COACH

ANTOINE KOMBOUARE (SINCE JUNE 2009)
If things go well the former PSG player will shine. But the real question is whether he's tough enough to slug it out should things get rough.

KEY PLAYER

NENE
The only midfielder in the top-10 Ligue 1 goalscorers last term. Much rests on the Brazilian's shoulders.

TACTICS

There will be a familiar look, but with Bodmer enforcing alongside Claude Makelele, and Nene setting up chances for Mevlut Erding and Guillaume Hoarau, the side looks both more solid and more creative than last term.

PORTO (POR)

Inexperienced...Villas-Boag

IT is the dawn of a new era – after four seasons with veteran Jesualdo Ferreira, who won three straight league titles, the Dragons have selected inexperienced coach Andre Villas-Boas to call the shots.

It's a tall order. Porto have done well in Europe's top club competition – they have won the title twice, in 1987 and 2004, and have made it to the last 16 of the Champions League in the last six seasons. Villas-Boas inherits a side in transition. Bruno Alves and Raul Meireles, influential members of the title-winning sides, have left. Central midfielder Joao Moutinho, recruited from Sporting Lisbon will be a key addition.

THE COACH

ANDRE VILLAS-BOAS (SINCE JUNE 2010)
At 33, he is one of the youngest Portuguese managers ever to coach one of the nation's big clubs.

KEY PLAYER

HULK
Explosive Brazilian forward with a venomous left foot who can score from anywhere. Deadly at set-pieces.

TACTICS

Fernando, nicknamed "the octopus", will be expected to spread his tentacles far and wide, allowing his midfield partners the freedom to create chances for goalscoring machine Radomel Falcao.

PSV EINDHOVEN (HOL)

Much expected...Berg

FOR the second consecutive season PSV will be competing in the Europa League, so it's no surprise that the focus in Eindhoven will be on the domestic title and entry to Europe's more prestigious tournament.

To prevent a sudden decline after the winter break like last season, coach Fred Rutten has spent wisely. Brazilian defender Marcelo arrived from Wisla Krakow, while much is expected from Marcus Berg who has proved for Sweden Under-21s that he is a perfect partner for Ola Toivonen. Success will also depend on whether playmaker Ibrahim Afellay stays.

THE COACH

FRED RUTTEN (SINCE 2009)
Realises the domestic title is more important than European success and has dumped several veterans in order to bring in new blood.

KEY PLAYER

MARCUS BERG
Joined on loan after a difficult season in Germany with Hamburg. Expected to pick up the scoring habit again.

TACTICS

PSV have, with Twente, the most balanced squad in the Eredivisie. Afellay is playmaker, while Atiba Hutchinson and Orlando Engelaar offer midfield drive. Up front, Jonathan Reis and Toivonen will step in if Berg fails to deliver.

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QARABAG (AZE)

Captain...Sadygov (left)

QARABAG made history last year by becoming the first Azerbaijani team to reach the final qualifying round of the Europa League – and then repeated the feat this season.

They went out to Twente last time around and also lost star forward Vagif Dzavadov in the process when he joined the Dutch club soon afterwards. But after a season blighted by injury he now wants to return to the Azeri club.

In this year's competition, Qarabag overcame Metalurg Skopje 5-2 on aggregate, Portadown (3-2) and Wisla Krakow (4-2) to set up a play-off with Borussia Dortmund.

THE COACH

GURBAN GURBANOV (SINCE 2008)
Record goalscorer for the national team with 14 goals in 65 games, he is the most successful Azerbaijani coach ever in European competition.

KEY PLAYER

RASHAD SADYGOV
Became captain of the national side when his current club boss, Gurbanov, retired as a player.

TACTICS

Gurbanov relies mostly on local players and these have been bolstered by the addition of Latvia's Euro 2004 striker Andrejs Rubins, Georgian forward Giorgi Adamia and Albanian defenders Admir Teli and Ansi Agolli.

RAPID WIEN (AUT)

Change in formation...Pacult

AUSTRIA'S most successful and popular team with 32 domestic league titles, Rapid are now struggling to keep pace with the new-found riches at Salzburg and are concentrating their efforts on developing their own talent.

Rapid have not made any major signings since last season and their preparations have been disrupted by the sale of Croatia striker Nikica Jelavic to Rangers. Several others have struggled for form. The Green-Whites reached the group stage of the Europa League last season, where they managed only one win in six outings.

THE COACH

PETER PACULT (SINCE 2006)
Former international who played for Rapid in the 3-1 loss to Everton in the 1985 Cup-winners Cup Final.

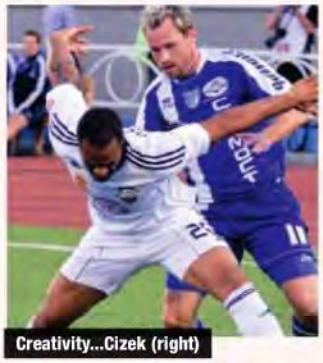
KEY PLAYER

STEFFEN HOFMANN
The German midfielder and team captain was the Austrian Bundesliga top scorer last term with 20 goals. He is hugely popular with the Rapid fans.

TACTICS

Coach Pacult tends to vary his formation between 4-2-3-1 and 4-4-2, with Rene Gartler possibly getting the nod to join Albania's Hamdi Salihi up front.

SIBIR NOVOSIBIRSK (RUS)


Creativity...Cizek (right)

THE Russian underdogs clinched their place in Europe by reaching the Cup Final where they lost 1-0 to league champions Zenit, who won the contest with a penalty.

Temperatures in Novosibirsk, the main city of Siberia – and Russia's third largest city with a population of 1.5 million people – will be really low from late autumn onwards. Home games are played on the artificial grass of their 12,500-capacity Spartak Stadium.

Aleksei Medvedev, the team's captain and leading striker, left for Rubin Kazan in August.

THE COACH

IGOR KRIUSHENKO (SINCE APRIL 2009)
The Belarusian took the team to second place in the Russian lower division in 2009, a position that earned Sibir a Premier Liga place for the first time.

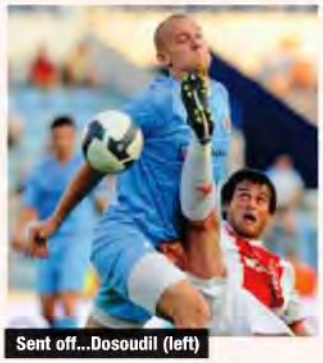
KEY PLAYER

TOMAS CIZEK
Czech attacking winger who was signed by Sibir earlier this year. Offers creativity down the flank.

TACTICS

While trying to match their equals, Sibir often put 10 men behind the ball against stronger sides. Their attack is most likely to be spearheaded by Aleksandr Antipenko after Medvedev's departure.

SLOVAN BRATISLAVA (SLK)


Sent off...Dosoudil (left)

ONE of the biggest surprises of this year's European qualifying rounds has been the form of the only Slovak club to have won a European trophy. After a couple of seasons in the doldrums, Slovan came back to win the league crown for the first time in 10 years in 2009 and were early leaders again this term.

Veteran coach Jozef Jankech then guided his side past Red Star Belgrade in the Europa League third qualifying round with a shock 2-1 victory in Serbia. In the return tie defender Radek Dosoudil was sent off, but they held on to draw 1-1 and progress 3-2 on aggregate.

THE COACH

JOZEF JANKECH (SINCE 2010)
After stints in Qatar, Malaysia and the Maldives, the 72-year-old is in his third spell at Slovan after two good seasons at Dukla Banska Bystrica.

KEY PLAYER

KARIM GUEDE
The Germany-born, Togo defensive midfielder enjoyed a majestic display in the vital home leg against Red Star.

TACTICS

Jankech has been coaching since 1966 and knows a good defensive midfield player – such as newcomer Guede – when he sees one. Slovan are hard to break down, as Red Star found out.

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SPORTING LISBON (POR)

Crucial...Maniche

THE winds of change have blown over Alvalade Stadium, with Paulo Sergio – formerly in charge of Vitoria Guimaraes – drafted in this summer to replace Carlos Carvalhal and revitalize a side that had its worst season since 1999.

Meanwhile, Portugal's Joao Moutinho was shipped off to Porto after falling out with the club's hierarchy. Miguel Veloso was also sold to Genoa to balance the books. The pair have been replaced by Spanish midfielder Alberto Zapater from Genoa and veteran midfielder Maniche from Koln.

THE COACH

PAULO SERGIO (SINCE JULY 2010)
Average as a player, he has enjoyed a meteoric rise since becoming a coach in 2003. An astute student of the game, he is known for the meticulous way he prepares games.

KEY PLAYER

LIEDSON
Has been the club's top scorer every season since signing from Corinthians in 2003.

TACTICS

While past Sporting coaches believed in the diamond formation, this year the team will play a classic 4-4-2. The partnership between veteran midfielders Pedro Mendes and Maniche will be crucial.

STEAUA BUCHAREST (ROM)

Skipper...Nicolita (left)

THREE months and two games after his appointment in May, Victor Piturca announced his resignation and became the 11th coach to leave Steaua in the last seven years. He has since been replaced by former international star Ilie Dumitrescu, who says: "Steaua have good players and I'll win the league title with them. If I fail, I'll quit."

Before leaving, Piturca had embarked a massive overhaul of the club's playing squad, bring in almost 20 new faces.

THE COACH

ILIE DUMITRESCU (SINCE AUGUST 2010)
Former Tottenham Hotspur and West Ham United striker whose coaching CV includes AEK Athens and PAOK in Greece.

KEY PLAYER

BANEL NICOLITA
Appointed club captain this season, but still best remembered for an own goal in Steaua's 1-0 defeat against Real Madrid in the Champions League four years ago.

TACTICS

Dumitrescu has inherited a side that Piturca had tried to model on the old Steaua side of the late 1980s who went 128 domestic games without defeat by relying on defensive strength.

STURM GRAZ (AUT)

Aerial strength...Schildenfeld

BRIEFLY successful during the late 1990s when they won the Austrian Bundesliga twice in a row and the Austrian Cup four times, Sturm also reached the Champions League group stage twice – memorably topping their group on one occasion, finishing ahead of Galatasaray, Rangers and Monaco.

Since then the club have fallen on hard times, at one stage flirting with bankruptcy, but they managed to pull through and last season won the Austrian Cup – their first trophy for 11 years.

Regarded as the town's working-class team, as opposed to upmarket rivals Grazer AK, Sturm reached the Europa League group stage for the first time last season.

THE COACH

FRANCO FODA (SINCE 2006)
Briefly coach in 2003 before taking over again three years later.

KEY PLAYER

GORDON SCHILDENFELD
Central defender signed from Besiktas in the close season.

TACTICS

Schildenfeld, the 25-year-old Croatia centre-back, is strong in the air and an accomplished passer. Samir Muratovic is an alternative up front, while the boss' son, Sandro Foda, and Mario Haas are midfield options.

STUTTGART (GER)

Up front...Pavel Pogrebnyak (right)

AFTER racking up more points in the second-half of last season than any other Bundesliga side, and pulling away from the relegation zone to eventually finish sixth, a buoyant Stuttgart would have been confident, in normal circumstances, of keeping up the good work this term. But with many of their best players departing this summer it is hard to visualise any other outcome but regression.

New signings such as Liverpool right-back Philipp Degen and Wolfsburg midfielder Christian Gentner are worthy rather than outstanding additions, while the lack of a playmaker and proven goalscorer could be a problem.

THE COACH

CHRISTIAN GROSS (SINCE DECEMBER 2009)
Ex-Tottenham Hotspur boss who led Basle to a decade of honours.

KEY PLAYER

CACAU
The Brazil-born Germany striker is the man Stuttgart cannot do without.

TACTICS

Gross will remain faithful to the compact 4-2-2-1-1 which brought him so much success last term. Every inch the pragmatist, he likes to run a tight tactical ship, with the midfield holders central to his plans.

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TAVRIYA SIMFEROPOL (UKR)

Surprise...Ukrainian Cup winners

THE only club representing the autonomous Republic of Crimea in the Ukraine top flight, Tavriya were surprise winners of the domestic cup last season under promising young coach Serhiy Puchkov.

Traditionally the club relies on the import of players from the former Yugoslav republics, mostly from Serbia, and two of them – defender Slobodan Markovic and midfielder Zeljko Ljubenovic – are among the best in the squad. Tavriya reinforced their back line this summer, signing Brazilian defender Leandro, who had spells in different European clubs including German side Munich 1860.

THE COACH

SERHIY PUCHKOV (SINCE 2008)
Led Tavriya to their first Ukraine Cup win in his second season in charge. Made his name as a player with Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk.

KEY PLAYER

OLEKSANDR KOVPAK
Ukrainian Premier League top scorer two seasons ago, he is an excellent dribbler who is prolific yet unselfish.

TACTICS

The only club in the Ukraine Premier League to play with three at the back. Under coach Puchkov the midfield is attack-minded which can leave the back three exposed.

THE NEW SAINTS (WAL)

Raised profile...Danny Holmes (right)

THE current Welsh champions certainly raised the profile of the Welsh Premier League with their Champions League performances, against Bohemians and Anderlecht, before dropping down into the Europa League play-off round.

Being a fully professional outfit not only gives TNS an edge domestically, it also benefits them in their preparations for the all-too-early starts of the qualifying rounds of European competition.

THE COACH

MIKE DAVIES (SINCE 2010)
Took over the reins when Andy Cale resigned at the end of last season, having been his assistant for a couple of years.

KEY PLAYER

STEVE EVANS
Former international centre-back who has the experience needed to marshal the defence and, as captain, motivates the team into an efficient unit. Good in the air, he is dangerous at set-pieces.

TACTICS

The defence is centred around Evans and Phil Baker, back from a spell with Wrexham. Matty Williams, a close-season signing from Rhyl provides the creativity alongside Scott Ruscoe. Chris Sharp is the main spearhead.

TIMISOARA (ROM)

Destructive...Alexa

ROCKED by rumours of match fixing in last year's Europa League game against Dinamo Zagreb, and with their bank account frozen by tax authorities this July, things have not been easy for the Romanian side over the past 12 months.

To make matters worse they lost some genuine talent in the summer, with Slovenia striker Dare Vrsic going home after the non-payment of wages and Brazilian right-back Eder Bonfim joining Steaua. But internationals Cosmin Contra and Iannis Zicu did join from Getafe and Dinamo Bucharest respectively.

THE COACH

VLADIMIR PETROVIC (SINCE JUNE 2010)
One-time Arsenal midfielder who joined Timisoara after being sacked by Red Star Belgrade in March.

KEY PLAYER

DAN ALEXA
An industrious, destructive midfielder who has a tendency to pick up red and yellow cards.

TACTICS

Slovakia central defender Marian Cisovsky is the only non-Romanian in a Timisoara rearguard which is offered protection by skipper Alexa and 34-year-old Contra.

TRABZONSPOR (TUR)

On fire...Teofilo

FOREVER in the shadow of the big three clubs from Istanbul, the Black Sea club have assembled a decent side despite not being able to buy the same quality of player.

With a highly experienced coach in Senol Gunes, they won the Turkish Cup last season and will be hoping for further honours domestically as they now have the strength to trouble Besiktas, Galatasaray and Fenerbahce.

THE COACH

SENOL GUNES (SINCE 2009)
The most successful coach in the country, he led the national team to third place in the 2002 World Cup.

KEY PLAYER

TEOFILO GUTIERREZ
The Colombia striker began the season on fire, scoring a hat-trick in the 3-0 Super Cup victory over Bursaspor. Just days later he netted both Trabzonspor goals on his Super Lig debut, against Ankaragucu.

TACTICS

Teofilo and back-up striker Umut Bulut should provide plenty of goals, but they still need to strengthen their defence – despite the signing of Poland's Arkadiusz Glowacki.

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UNIREA URZICENI (ROM)

Creative...Iulian Apostol (left)

THE resignation of president Mihai Stoica in August threw Unirea into turmoil with coach Ronny Levy following suit, claiming: "Stoica brought me here – and if he leaves, I'll leave too."

Stoica quit over what appears to be a lack of financial commitment from the club's owner, Dumitru Bucsaru, with wages going unpaid and several players saying they want to leave as free agents. Before the current storm broke, Levy added former Steaua Bucharest captain Petre Marin and French striker Junior Dale to his squad over the summer.

THE COACH

RONNY LEVY (SINCE DECEMBER 2009)
Experienced Isreali who had the difficult task of replacing title-winning coach Dan Petrescu. Agreed to remain in charge for the play-off games against Hajduk Split.

KEY PLAYER

IULIAN APOSTOL
A skilful midfielder, who is creative and spectacular.

TACTICS

In what has been a difficult season so far, Unirea will rely on Argentinian full-back Pablo Brandan and George Galamaz to steady things at the back, while looking to Raul Rusescu and Marius Bilasco for goals.

UTRECHT (HOL)

Local hero...Du Chatinier

BACKED by millionaire owner Frans Van Seumeren, Utrecht remain a work in progress as they attempt to secure a permanent place in Holland's top five. And by winning the play-offs to clinch the last Europa League ticket they have already taken a step forward in the right direction.

Their European campaign started against FK Tirana just four days after goalkeeper Michel Vorm had watched the World Cup Final from the bench and satisfying their demanding fans could be tough after such an early start.

THE COACH

TON DU CHATINIER (SINCE 2008)
Was a local hero as a no-nonsense centre-back who has now brought passion and attractive football to the team as coach.

KEY PLAYER

RICKY VAN WOLFSWINKEL
Could be Holland's next great striker, he is Johan Neeskens' son-in-law.

TACTICS

Utrecht will play a 4-4-2 with Van Wolfswinkel and Zambia's Jacob Mulenga as striking partners. In midfield, Jacob Lensky and Nana Asare are rapidly developing, while Michael Silberbauer is an experienced captain.

VASLUI (ROM)

Boy from Brazil...Gladstone (left)

ALTHOUGH coach Marius Lacatus left in the summer so that his children could be educated in Spain, Vaslui's new Spanish boss, Lopez Caro, looks to have inherited an even stronger squad than the one that finished third in the league last term.

Owner Adrian Porumboiu has brought in Brazilian striker Adailton from Bologna in the country's most lucrative transfer of the summer and he could be paired up front with Rodolfo Bodipo, who is on loan from Deportivo La Coruna. Cameroonian striker Christian Pouga was also signed from Leixoes of Portugal.

THE COACH

LOPEZ CARO (SINCE JUNE 2010)
"All credit for the Spaniard coach, who is working 24 hours daily to build the team which I wish for my city," says owner Porumboiu of his latest appointment.

KEY PLAYER

WESLEY
The Brazilian playmaker is also capable of conjuring goals out of nothing.

TACTICS

Wesley is the team's best player and he drives his team-mates on by example. A strong midfield, backed by skilful players from Brazil, Romania and Serbia, create plenty of goalscoring opportunities.

VILLARREAL (SPA)

In control...Nilmar (right)

VILLARREAL are undergoing major changes and are a very different team to the one that reached the semi-finals of the Champions League in 2006. They finished seventh in last season's Spanish Liga and only qualified for the Europa League when fifth-placed Mallorca were refused a licence on financial grounds.

This summer saw plenty of departures, including Ariel Ibagaza, Robert Pires, Damian Escudero and Joseba Llorente. However, Borja Valero is an excellent signing though, and in Nilmar and Giuseppe Rossi, Villarreal have a strike force to trouble many defences.

THE COACH

JUAN CARLOS GARRIDO (SINCE FEBRUARY 2010)
Former reserve team coach who took the reins following Ernesto Valverde's sacking mid-season.

KEY PLAYER

NILMAR
The Brazilian has been outstanding in his second spell in European football.

TACTICS

Villarreal play a conventional 4-4-2, with wide men Cani and Santi Cazorla providing the ammunition for Nilmar and Rossi. Bruno Soriano, a recent Spain cap, holds the midfield together, with captain Marcos Senna.

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SIX OF THE BEST TOP-FLIGHT

Olivier GIROUD

MONTPELLIER

TOP scorer in Ligue 2 last season with 21 goals for Tours and voted the division's best player by his fellow professionals, the tall and powerfully-built striker could do absolutely no wrong last term and the step-up to Ligue 1 was inevitable, with Montpellier seeing off a number of top-flight outfits – among them Monaco, Sochaux and Celtic – to secure the 23-year-old's signature.

His choice of new employer seems a good one as, home-grown or not, the southern club has a messianic zeal for cramming youngsters into their side – not for nothing is former France Under-21 coach Rene Girard in charge – and, usually served by two wingers, Giroud will rarely be deprived of service.

With Grenoble, and Istres on loan prior to joining Tours, Giroud is good in the air, has the rippling carcass of a boxer and yet still manages to be mobile. In the debit column, he is not particularly explosive and needs to improve his positional work. Once a member of the same France Under-16 side as Yoann Gourcuff, he had the critics purring in admiration when scoring four times in one game against Arles-Avignon a year ago.

Gary HOOPER

CELTIC

AFTER four seasons in the English lower leagues with Southend United, Leyton Orient, Hereford United and Scunthorpe United, the 22-year-old now finds himself at one of the Scottish game's top addresses: Celtic Park.

In the summer of 2008, when moving from Southend to Scunthorpe, he cost a paltry £125,000. But nothing inflates the price of a footballer like goals and, thanks to 50 emphatic finishes in two years, his move to Celtic cost £2.4million. Naturally Scunthorpe were sad to see him go, but he leaves behind a tremendous legacy: his substantial contribution to the club's promotion to the English Championship in 2009 and their successful fight against relegation last term.

With non-league outfit Grays Athletic as recently as 2005, Hooper certainly has what it takes to go into orbit in Scotland. He has a fine first touch, is extremely sharp in the box and dangerous when playing on the shoulder of the last defender. He bristles with self-confidence and scored on his SPL debut, against Inverness Caledonian Thistle.

Joao SILVA

EVERTON

WHO needs overseas millions when your club has such a canny detector of value-for-money buys as David Moyes?

In the absence of a sugar daddy in the Goodison Park boardroom, Everton manager Moyes has to be cuter and better informed than his competitors in the transfer market and this was the case in the summer when he clinched the £530,000 acquisition of the 20-year-old front runner from Portuguese second-tier side Desportivo das Aves.

Widely considered the most accomplished natural predator to come out of Portugal since Pauleta in the late 1990s, Silva had been rumoured to be on the verge of a switch to Portuguese champions Benfica or Deportivo La Coruna in Spain. But as soon as the persuasive Moyes came calling, there was only ever likely to be one outcome.

"The chance to move to the Premier League was an opportunity I just couldn't ignore," says Silva, who scored 14 goals for Aves last term, his first as a professional.

"It's the best championship in the world and I think the sort of football played there will suit me."

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NEW BOYS

Nick Bidwell picks half a dozen of the most promising strikers to step up from second-tier football this summer

Peniel MLAPA

HOFFENHEIM

THE Bundesliga side almost exclusively recruit promising youngsters and the teenage, ex-1860 Munich front-man Mlapa certainly fits the bill. A powerful presence at the point of attack, quick and technical, the Germany Under-19 international had been monitored by the likes of Everton, Schalke and Napoli, only for Hoffenheim to prove the most insistent, rushing to donate £1.1million to the "Save 1860" fund.

"He's quite simply the best German striker of the class of 91," says Hoffenheim's general manager Ernst Tanner. "I should know; I worked with him when he was a young boy at 1860."

Mlapa, who despite standing 6ft 4in admits he needs to work on his aerial game, was born in Togo but moved to Munich with his family at the age of two and took up German citizenship in 2008. He joined 1860 while still at primary school and effortlessly rose through the ranks to make his first-team debut in May of last year.

As well as adjusting to life in the German top flight, Mlapa will spend his first few months completing his civic national service at a hospital in the Hoffenheim area.

Mauricio PINILLA

PALERMO

SPOILT in recent times by such potent finishers as Luca Toni and Amauri, Palermo believe they have enrolled another from the same prolific school in "Pinigol", the Chilean who hit 24 goals in as many second-division games for Tuscan outfit Grosseto last term. Little wonder half of Serie A were bending over backwards to sign the 26-year-old.

With his good touch, ability to hold the ball up, strength in the air and an innate instinct for goals, he would not have looked out of place had he been selected for Chile's World Cup squad for South Africa.

Palermo, who paid £4.5million for him, probably represents his last shot at the big-time. First brought to Europe in 2003, when Internazionale signed him from Universidad de Chile, he was in self-destruct mode for many of the ensuing seasons, more interested in partying than performing, and flopped at a succession of clubs, including Chievo, Celta Vigo, Racing Santander, Hearts and Apollon Limassol.

He now claims to be a reformed character and 12 wonderful months at Grosseto would appear to back up the claim.

Salomon RONDON

MALAGA

THE new Qatari owner of Malaga, Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser Al Thani, is determined to oversee an improvement in the club's fortunes after last season's flirtation with relegation when they only avoided the drop on the final weekend of the campaign thanks to a draw with Real Madrid. And that should be a perfectly feasible goal now they have got this exciting 20-year-old, a £3.1million catch of the day from second division Las Palmas.

Just one of a brilliant generation of young Venezuelans, the Caracas-born Rondon combines teak-tough physical presence with cunning off the ball movement and high-quality finishing with either head or foot.

He was just 16 when he made his pro debut for top-flight Venezuelan side Aragua in October 2006 and was his country's top scorer at the 2009 World Under-20 Championship with three goals.

He spent two seasons in the Canaries with Las Palmas, starting out tentatively before spectacularly coming to life in his second season there.

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FACE TO FACE

Interviews with football's biggest names

Julio Grondona

Next season no hooligan, or anybody else, will be able to get free tickets any more

Julio Grondona

The Argentinian FA boss on tackling hooliganism in his country's domestic game and why the paying fan is no longer a priority

Passing **problems**

ON THE office desk of Argentinian FA president Julio Grondona there is a silver plaque reading *"Todo pasa"* and he wears a ring with the same inscription. The phrase translates as "everything passes" and also "everything happens". Grondona, also a FIFA vice-president, prefers the first translation, but while he has just completed 30 years as head of the AFA – longer than any of his predecessors – everything has happened but not all the problems have passed.

How are you dealing with the problem of hooliganism and the club officials who support the hooligans with free match tickets to sell, transport to away matches and even cash?
The AFA cannot do anything about the hooligans but I agree that tougher laws are needed. Also, in Europe they crowd them into a special place in stadiums. Here they take over their own places. But next season they, or anybody else, will not be able to get free tickets any more unless somebody [a club official] pays for them and I don't think they will do that. We are arranging a new system to sell tickets through banks at cash machines and people will need a special identity card to get them. These cards will not be given to hooligans with pending court cases.

The system will not be ready for the start of the 2010-11 season and it is not quite clear how these IDs will be kept out of the hands of hooligans. How will it work for foreigners and others who just come to see one or two games? And why will visiting fans still not be allowed into stadiums of clubs below the top division?
It is not like in England where clubs come from different towns. Here, in the Buenos Aires area, they are all close together which is more likely to cause friction. But you will notice that hooligans cause most of the trouble outside stadiums now. Club officials are happy about not having visiting fans as they have to pay less for police protection.

Do you think the relegation system, which takes into account points obtained over the last three seasons, is unfair? The system was started years ago when River Plate were in danger of going down. They started this season bottom of the relegation table, so will the system be changed again?
I believe it is fair and increases competition. Also, not one club official has complained about it, not even River Plate's.

Referees in local championships are suspended for one or more matches when making mistakes. Does that help them to improve?
Yes. It's the same as with players who are suspended when sent off and I think it leads to referees being more careful not to make mistakes.

Are you, like FIFA president Sepp Blatter, against using technology to help referees?
Yes, I am against the use of technology. In the World Cup it would be OK, but for other matches it would be too costly to install the equipment in stadiums.

You once said players' agents should be expelled from the game. Have you done anything about it?
It's impossible. It was FIFA's fault for registering them in the first place – and when the problem became too much for them, they passed it on to the individual national associations.

You also once said that the continual exodus of Argentinian players to other countries had to be stopped. You also wanted to stop youth teams from playing international tournaments abroad.
That's also impossible, but the recent FIFA rule banning players under 18 from being transferred should help.

What can be done to improve football in Argentina?
Clubs should have more patience with coaches and not fire them when the team loses some games. The AFA has always allowed national team coaches to complete their contracts, if they wanted.

But how can you get this into the heads of club officials?
That is the hard part, but I would also love to impose maximum 25-player squads at clubs, including a minimum of eight home-grown players, which would improve selection and the use of more home-grown talent, following a recent suggestion of the English Premier League. But the investors of English clubs have done the game little service with their high player salaries and transfer fees.

Why will all matches, except for the Final, be played outside Buenos Aires in next year's Copa America? Is this not bad for ticket sales?
We want to spread the matches around the country for the first time. It will not be bad economically because expenses are lower in the provinces and it does not matter if there are fewer spectators because today money comes from TV sponsors and advertising, and only a minor part from spectators.

All top-flight Argentinian games are televised on free TV. Are you worried that the government, especially if it changes, will not comply with payments for its 10-year "free football for all" TV contract with the AFA?
The government is complying in spite of losing a lot of money and I am glad the clubs are getting more money. I am not afraid of the contract being cancelled as it is with the state and not the government.

Interview by Eric Weil

Troubled times...Huracan fans flee tear gas fired by ant-riot police

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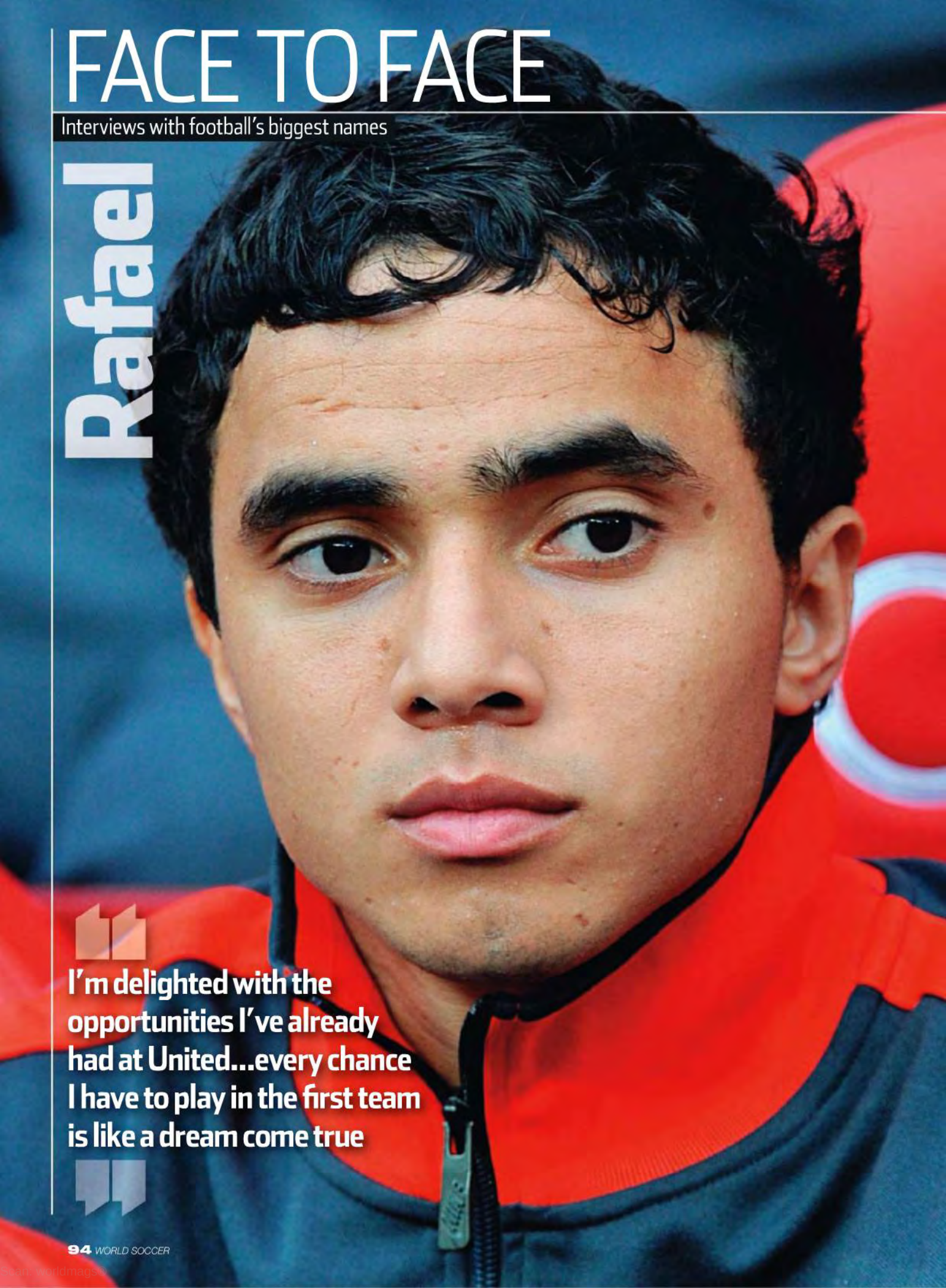
FACE TO FACE

Interviews with football's biggest names

Rafael



I'm delighted with the opportunities I've already had at United...every chance I have to play in the first team is like a dream come true

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Rafael

Manchester United's youngster on the title race, playing at Wembley and being called up by Brazil

Brazilian ambition

How did you feel when you were dethroned as Premier League champions by Chelsea last season?
Of course, you sulk at first because it is a difficult and painful experience. We had won the Premier League in the three previous seasons and our expectations were high. But then you begin to focus, concentrating on the fact you do not want to feel that bitter taste of defeat ever again and the disappointment becomes your driving motivation.

Can Manchester United become champions of England again this season?
We would love to regain our Premier League title this season, that's for sure. It is what we will strive to achieve between now and May. We are under no illusions that Chelsea will not surrender the title without a fight and it would be naive to write off the challenge of other clubs.

You were sent off in last season's Champions League quarter-final second leg against Bayern Munich as United crashed out of Europe. Another bitter memory?
Of course it was frustrating because we know we could have been in the Final, playing against Inter. Unfortunately this is the nature of football and you must experience the highs and also the lows. We made some fatal mistakes in the quarter-final against Bayern and this is why we did not progress further. I hold my hand up, my red card did not help the cause and the team was punished.

This season's Champions League Final is at Wembley. Is that an extra incentive for United?
Appearing in the Final at Wembley, the home of English football, would certainly be special and I am sure it is a prize that will spur on each of the Premier League sides in the competition.

Did last season's Champions League signal a shift in the balance of power in European football away from the Premier League?
I understand the question but I think it is easy to forget how difficult a trophy the Champions League is for any team to win. English clubs had played in the last five Finals and because it was not the case last season people talk of failure. It also does not give credit to Inter and Bayern Munich for reaching the Final. I'm sure the English sides will be strong again this season.

Red devil...Rafael (far right) gets his marching orders against Bayern in last season's Champions League quarter-final

Despite playing more than 40 games for United, you're still not a first-team regular. Does that frustrate you?
No, not at all. I am only 20 and I'm delighted with the opportunities I've already had at United. I'm happy with the progress I've made in England and every chance I have to play in the first team is like a dream come true for me. I came to Old Trafford from the youth academy at Fluminense and I'm still learning about life as a professional player.

You were included in the Brazil squad for the friendly against the USA. Were you surprised new manager Mano Menezes made the call?
A little, yes. When there are players like Maicon and Dani Alves in my position, you know you have to be patient. They are world-class players and I could not dream of challenging them right now; maybe one day, but certainly not now. It was an honour just to be part of the squad.

United have signed Javier Hernandez from Guadalajara. What have been your first impressions of the Mexican?
I can tell you from experience he is incredibly fast and he certainly knows what to do with the ball at his feet. He had a very good World Cup for Mexico and I believe he will be a very important signing for us this season. We did not win the Premier League or the Champions League last season and the fans will be expecting us to do better. We will need everybody playing well and I'm sure Javier will play his part.

Young star...Rafael only turned 20 in July

Everyone is talking about Wayne Rooney's poor displays at the World Cup. Can you explain what happened?
Don't forget the whole England team had problems in South Africa. Maybe Wayne did not have enough time to recover after getting injured towards the end of last season and that is why he was not the special player we all know.

Are you concerned he could suffer a mental hangover this season after his problems in South Africa?
Certainly not. I really don't think he will struggle. The guy is pure class and I am sure he will remind people just how good he is again this season. Wayne plays without fear and I have no doubt he will do this once again for United.

Interview by Fernando Duarte

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JOBSON

Botafogo striker putting drug problems behind him

BRAZIL

THE STORY of Jobson is an example of the extraordinary strength in depth of Brazilian football.

Towards the end of last year, fresh from a short spell with Jeju United in South Korea, the young striker arrived on loan at Botofogo of Rio as an unknown – though not for long.

He made a big impression and had a key influence on the outcome of the national championship. In one of the last rounds he tore Sao Paulo's much-vaunted defence to shreds, scoring two and setting up the other in a dramatic 3-2 win. As it turned out, victory for Sao Paulo would have given them a fourth consecutive title, while anything other than a win would have meant relegation for Botafogo.

Jobson had much to look forward to. He was set to join Cruzeiro and a good Libertadores Cup campaign would do wonders for his visibility. He might catch the eye of a major European club or put himself in line for a Brazil call-up with the side rebuilding for 2014. It all seemed his for the taking.

But the story of Jobson is also an example of the size and depth of Brazil's social problems. He failed a drug test. It emerged that he had a problem with crack, and his career was hanging in the balance.

The inability to handle his sudden success was hardly a surprise. Jobson confessed to Brazilian magazine *Placar* that when he was growing up in a small northern town he was so adept at petty theft that his mother feared he would turn into a criminal. He was one of millions in this giant country without much of an education, lacking a solid family structure and short of opportunities – except, in his case, on the football field.

At Brasiliense, his first professional club, there were problems with alcohol and indiscipline which would be repeated, this time with crack, after a small taste of the big time with Botafogo.

He showed positive in two separate tests and there were even fears of a lifetime ban from football. In the event he was given two years.

Cruzeiro dropped him and he went back to Brasiliense to train and receive psychological help, and on appeal his ban was reduced to six months. Botafogo offered him a five-year contract and, after the pause for the World Cup, Jobson was back in action once again, making an excellent impression in the Brazilian Championship.

A stocky support striker, he is most effective moving in from the flanks. His tight dribbling, acceleration and his two-footed ability make him a defender's nightmare. From either wing he can cut in and shoot, or go outside and pull the ball back from the byline.

He has the talent to be a big star, but it is up to him to write the next chapters of his story.

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Full name Jobson Leandro Pereira de Oliveira
Club Botafogo
Country Brazil
Born February 15, 1988, in Conceicao do Araguaia
Previous clubs Brasiliense, Jeju United (SKo, loan)

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David DE GEA

Young stopper is keeping grounded

SPAIN

SHOWERED WITH praise for his fine performances in 2007 with Spain Under-17s – a period in which they won the European title as well as finishing second in the world championship – and a role in Atletico Madrid's Europa League triumph last season, De Gea is not the sort to be blown off-course by the high winds of hype.

A level-headed character, he has his very own insurance policy against complacency: memories of the despair that he went through shortly after gaining entry to the Atletico Madrid schoolboy section and the 12 months he then spent sidelined with a complicated knee condition.

If Atletico, and particularly youth-goalkeeping coach Sergio Garrido, had not believed in him so much, his career might have ended before it had truly begun. Fortunately for De Gea the complaint eventually cleared up and since then he has been on a mission to make up for lost time, excelling with the club's youth and reserve teams, becoming a regular for Spain's junior sides and finally graduating to the Atletico first team in September 2009, when he was handed his chance as a substitute in a 2-0 Champions League defeat away to Porto.

Only on the bench that night in Portugal because first-choice keeper Sergio Asenjo was away with Spain Under-20s at the world finals, De Gea was summoned to replace the injured Roberto midway through the first-half and, though he did concede two late goals, nothing could detract from an exceptional performance and a good hour of spectacular stops, decisive cross collecting and rare serenity. Three days later in his first Liga start, he was excellent again, saving a penalty in a 2-1 win over Real Zaragoza.

On returning from international action, Asenjo was restored to the Atletico goal, but his grasp on the position was considerably looser and after a number of costly errors he found himself replaced early in the new year by De Gea, who subsequently cemented his place in the hierarchy with a string of man-of-the-match displays in La Liga and by playing a major part in the Club's victory in Europe – eight games, including the 2-1 win against Fulham in the Final, and just eight goals conceded.

"David was a kid when I first saw him play, but even at that age it was clear he had all the fundamentals of a great keeper," says Diego, the ex-Atletico goalie credited with discovering him.

"In my opinion keepers are born. However he realises there can be no triumphs on the pitch without hard work off it. He is ready to make the sacrifices."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Atletico Madrid
Country Spain
Born November 7, 1990, in Madrid
Honours 2007 European Under-17 Championship, 2010 Europa League

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PORTUGAL

SERGIO OLIVEIRA

Porto's youngest-ever first-team star

A TREASURE OF a teenage midfielder, as comfortable making the play as occupying a holding role, Sergio Oliveira was always likely to star in the blue-and-white of Porto. After all, he has been an official club member since the day he was born, 18 years ago, with his football-mad uncle, Agostinho, completing the formalities the minute the little one came into the world.

His destiny suitably instructed, the kid from the Aveiro region to the north of Oporto, would soon be making a name for himself in the game. Even at the age of nine he was good enough to have national institutions Porto and Sporting of Lisbon vying for his signature. But with eyes only for the former, he duly pledged allegiance to the Dragons and rose so impressively through the ranks that last autumn he became the youngest player ever to feature in the Porto first team: just 17 years, 4 months and 15 days old when appearing in a Portuguese Cup tie against Sertanense. He looked the part too, celebrating his big night by laying on a goal for team-mate Hulk.

The previous holder of this particular record, iconic 1970s and 80s striker Fernando Gomes, served Porto admirably for 13 years and while the youngster may not endure so long in the post-Bosman era, the management at the Estadio do Dragao are nevertheless doing everything they can to keep him on board for as long as possible. Last year they extended his contract until 2012 and, anxious to deter any frivolous enquiries, they have made him the subject of a £25million buyout clause – tellingly the same release figure as the club's Portugal midfielder Raul Meireles.

Porto have a much-cherished tradition for producing multifaceted midfielders, players who can turn their hand to any number of tasks in the engine room and Sergio Oliveira is the perfect case in point. The Portugal Under-19 mainstay is not only technically outstanding, he is also a visionary passer and wonderful improviser, never short of a solution when in a tight spot. He is also industrious, totally committed and very disciplined. In short, a natural.

"He has the rare ability to make complex situations look really straightforward," says Carlos Dinis, the former coach of Portugal's juniors. "He has great anticipation, and invariably executes very well indeed on the pitch. He has a huge amount of potential."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Porto
Country Portugal
Born June 2, 1992, in Pacos de Brandao

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FIVE TO FOLLOW

Nick Bidwell profiles the stars of the European Under-19 Championship

Club/Country Hajduk Split/Croatia
Born June 22, 1991
Position Midfielder

Franko ANDRIJASEVIC

RESPONSIBLE for one of the goals of the tournament – in Croatia's 2-1 loss to Spain – with a brilliantly flighted long-range effort which had top-class written right through it.

Seems to have all of the middle of the park bases covered – a good right foot, strength and athleticism, the ability to make incisive forward runs and an eye for goal – and has already come to the attention of Italian and German clubs.

Club/Country Hertha Berlin (Ger)/Austria
Born December 12, 1992
Position Forward

Marco DJURICIN

ALTHOUGH his side came last in their group, the youngster was anything but a flop, instigating a large proportion of Austria's forward raids and linking brilliantly with his creative partner in crime, David Alaba.

Normally used as a conventional striker by Hertha, who signed him from Rapid Wien a year ago, he plays much deeper for the national team as a classic playmaker. One of the youngest players at this year's finals.

Club/Country Liverpool (Eng)/Spain
Born January 5, 1991
Position Midfielder

Daniel PACHECO

LINING up on the left-side of an attacking midfield triumvirate, the teenager dubbed "The Assassin" proved a constant menace to opposition defences and deservedly ended the tournament as its top scorer with four goals.

Prised away from Barcelona by Liverpool in 2007, he is especially dangerous cutting inside and found the time to turn provider too, producing the through ball which led to team-mate Rodrigo scoring in the defeat to France in the Final.

Club/Country Feyenoord/Holland
Born September 27, 1992
Position Forward

Luc CASTAIGNOS

WHILE it's never easy to be compared to a player such as Thierry Henry, the youngster seems to be handling the plaudits very maturely indeed.

A front runner of electrifying pace and elegance, he might not be the strongest in the air, but why focus unduly on the negative when he can finish so splendidly with his feet? Born in Holland, the son of a French father and a mother from Cape Verde, he starred at last year's Euro Under-17 finals.

Club/Country Lyon/France
Born February 11, 1991
Position Forward

Yannis TAFER

INTELLIGENT and gifted young marksman who has scored goals in industrial quantities for his country at Under-17, 18 and 19 levels.

Cunning in his movement in and around the box and an ice-cool finisher, he does on occasion irritate his coaches by insisting on dropping too deep in search of the ball. At Lyon, whom he joined at the age of 12 in 2003, he is rated their most accomplished home-grown product since Karim Benzema.

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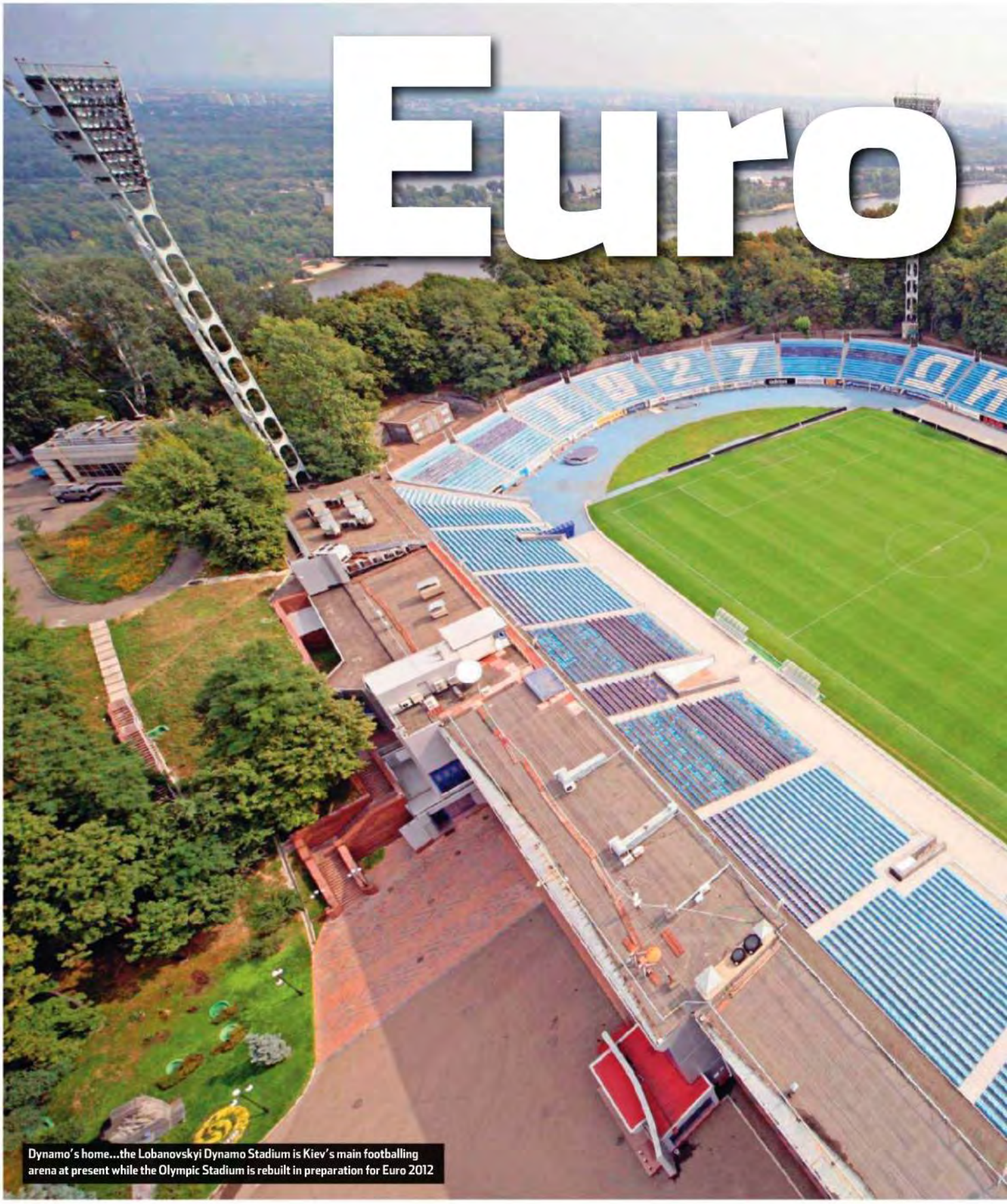
SOCCER CITIES

KIEV The clubs, the history, what to see, how to get there

Euro



Dynamo's home...the Lobanovskyi Dynamo Stadium is Kiev's main footballing arena at present while the Olympic Stadium is rebuilt in preparation for Euro 2012

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host

Peterjon Cresswell visits one of the oldest cities in eastern Europe as it gears up to stage the European Championship Final in 2012

THE UKRAINIAN CAPITAL of Kiev is at the centre of one of Europe's great football empires – as proven by its upcoming role as the key host of Euro 2012, staging the Final itself. At the helm is the city's flagship club, Dynamo, who have been at the pinnacle of the Soviet and the independent national game for four decades, with waves of success in Europe.

Founded as a branch of the Ukrainian Electrical Workers' Union under the newly established Communist set-up in 1927, Dynamo were inaugural members of the Soviet Top League in 1936 and would become one of three teams never to be relegated.

In the summer of 1942 the club were involved in what would later become known as "The Death match", a game in which a number of Dynamo regulars played against a team of Nazis, the outcome of which resulted in some of the victorious local players being arrested, tortured and even killed.

In peacetime, Dynamo never managed to challenge the domestic monopoly of the Moscow clubs until the Khrushchev era of the early 1960s. The national leader was a Dynamo fan and political favours soon fell their way.

Huge bearing on later development

Club coach Oleg Oshenkov was responsible for bringing in three youngsters who would have a huge bearing on the later development of the club: Jozsef Szabo, Oleh Bazylevych and Valeriy Lobanovskyi helped Dynamo win their first Soviet title in 1961.

When Victor Maslov arrived as head coach in 1964, Lobanovskyi left for Odessa. Maslov's men, with striker Anatoliy Byshovets leading from the front, maintained the club's domestic success and made strides in Europe, and by the early 1970s, Dynamo's giant goalkeeper Yevhen Rudakov, midfielders Volodymyr Troshkin and Viktor Kolotov, and forward Volodymyr Onyshchenko, also formed the core of the Soviet national side.

It was then that master tactician

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THE STADIUMS

1 OLYMPIC STADIUM
Currently being adapted to host Euro 2012, with a new press area, roof and West Stand, the 69,000-capacity arena will be unveiled in 2011. Dynamo occasionally play key European and domestic fixtures here.

2 LOBANOVSKYI DYNAMO STADIUM
Dynamo's main ground was first opened in 1934 and later renamed after the club's great coach. Current capacity is 17,000 but there are plans to increase the number of seats to 30,000, and add a roof over the stand.

3 KOLOS STADIUM
Arsenal's home ground was opened in the 1950s and now has a capacity of 6,000.

4 OBOLON STADIUM
Obolon Kyiv's home has a 4,000 capacity and will be used as a training facility for Euro 2012.

Open next year...the Olympic Stadium

Plans for expansion...Lobanovski Dynamo Stadium

Arsenal's home...Kolos Stadium

Training facility...Obolon Stadium

Lobanovskyi and harsh trainer Bazylevych returned to the club to establish a scientific regime, with meticulous preparation of players, not least the talented youngster Oleg Blokhin. With Leonid Buryak and Volodymyr Muntyan in their midfield, Dynamo won the European Cup-winners Cup in 1975. However, the team failed to equal this success in the European Cup after the team were selected en bloc as Soviet Olympic representatives, but they were simply playing too much football and Bazylevych left.

When new arrivals Oleksandr Zavarov from Zorya Voroshilovgrad and Ihor Belanov from Odessa joined Blokhin and Buryak, a new-look Dynamo side won another Cup-Winners' Cup in 1986. Zavarov and Belanov also shone at the World Cup that summer, but subsequent transfers abroad did them little good, while Lobanovskyi left to coach in the Middle East.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and independence for Ukraine, Dynamo lacked the wherewithal in a transitional economy to

Success...Dynamo celebrate winning the 1986 European Cup-winners Cup

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match past successes. It took the arrival of entrepreneur Hryhoriy Surkis to re-establish the club, though they would receive a two-year European ban for the alleged bribing of match officials in 1995.

Meticulously developed

The key to Dynamo's revival, and a third great side, was the return of Lobanovskyi – and the nurturing of young forwards Serhiy Rebrov and, most tellingly, Andriy Shevchenko. Again, speed and technique were meticulously developed, and Dynamo began to claim significant scalps in Europe while dominating the weaker independent Ukrainian league at home.

For the 1998-99 Champions League campaign, disappointing games in the group stage did not hinder the team's confidence or counter-attacking verve and they reached the quarter-final stage, where they shocked Real Madrid to set up a classic semi-final with Bayern Munich. Leading 3-1 at home, Dynamo seemed to be cruising to a first Champions League Final – until Bayern pegged them back to 3-3, and then won the second leg 1-0. The moment had gone. Both

> **"The development of another new all-conquering Dynamo side awaits"**

Shevchenko and Rebrov headed abroad, and Lobanovskyi took the national job – but years of stress had taken their toll and he died of a stroke in 2002. The Dynamo stadium was later renamed after him.

Dynamo continue to challenge for domestic success with eternal rivals Shakhtar Donetsk and they have hired a number of foreign coaches, most recently Russia's Valery Gazzaev, but the development of another all-conquering new side awaits.

The city is also home to two other top-flight clubs: Obolon Kyiv and Arsenal Kyiv.

Obolon were founded in 1992 as Zmina ("next generation"), later changing to their current name to reflect the administrative district of Kiev in which they play.

The club spent three seasons in the Ukrainian Premier League before being relegated in 2005. They finished the 2008–09 season as runners-up in the Ukrainian First League and finally returned to the top flight last season.

Arsenal emerged in 2001 from the ashes of the long-established CSKA Kyiv. ●

Euro hit...Roman Zozulya celebrates scoring against Gent of Belgium in this season's Champions League qualifiers

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Kiev knowledege

● ARRIVAL & TRANSPORT

Boryspil Airport is 24 miles south-east of the city centre. Buses to the central train station leave every 30 minutes in peak time and take about 45 minutes. City transport consists of a three-line metro, buses, trams and trolleybuses.

● HOTELS & INFORMATION

Mass tourism has yet to come to Kiev, so most hotels are geared towards the business traveller, with cheaper options few and far between. The Premier Palace Hotel (vul. Taras Shevchenka 5-7, +380 44 244 1201, www.premier-palace.com, $350-400) is probably the best, with gym and conference facilities. The Rus (Hospitalna 4, +380 44 256 4000, www.hotelrus.kiev.ua, $200) is handy for the Olympic Stadium. The Druzhba (vul. Druzhba Narodov 5, +380 44 528 3406, www.hotel-druzhba.com.ua $60) is a simple, basic option near Libidska metro station.

● EATING & DRINKING

Restaurants abound in Kiev, with many beyond the spending power of the locals. The cosmopolitan Concord (Pushkinska 42, +380 44 234 7788) is a classic case in point. For decent affordable local fare, try the Khutorok (nab.Khreshchatytska). Bars and clubs include the fashionable Arena (Baseina 2A), while O'Briens (Mykhailivska 17A) is an Irish pub with plenty of football talk.

● DAYTIME ENTERTAINMENT

The Caves Monastery – or Kievsko-Pecherska Lavra (www.kplavra.kiev.ua) – is Kiev's oldest and holiest religious site. The city's other major attraction is St Sophia Cathedral (Volodymyrska 24, +380 44 279 2256), recognisable by its blue-and-white tower.

● MATCH DAY

The Olympic Stadium is close to the metro station Respublikanskiy Stadion, while Dynamo's stadium is close to the Arsenalna metro station. You'll find a modest terrace bar by the main entrance and the ticket office is opposite. There's a Dynamo souvenir store at Vul. Chervonoarminska 88. The Obolon Stadium is in north Kiev, near Heroiv Dnipra metro station, while Arsenal's Kolos ground in Borispil is near the city's airport.

● FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

● Lobanovskyi Dynamo Stadium

Sep 11 Dynamo v Metalurh Zaporizhya
Sep 25 Dynamo v Arsenal

● Obolon Stadium

Sep 10 Obolon v Shakhtar Donetsk
Sep 24 Obolon v Volyn Lutsk

● Kolos Stadium

Sep 17 Arsenal v Metalist Kharkiv
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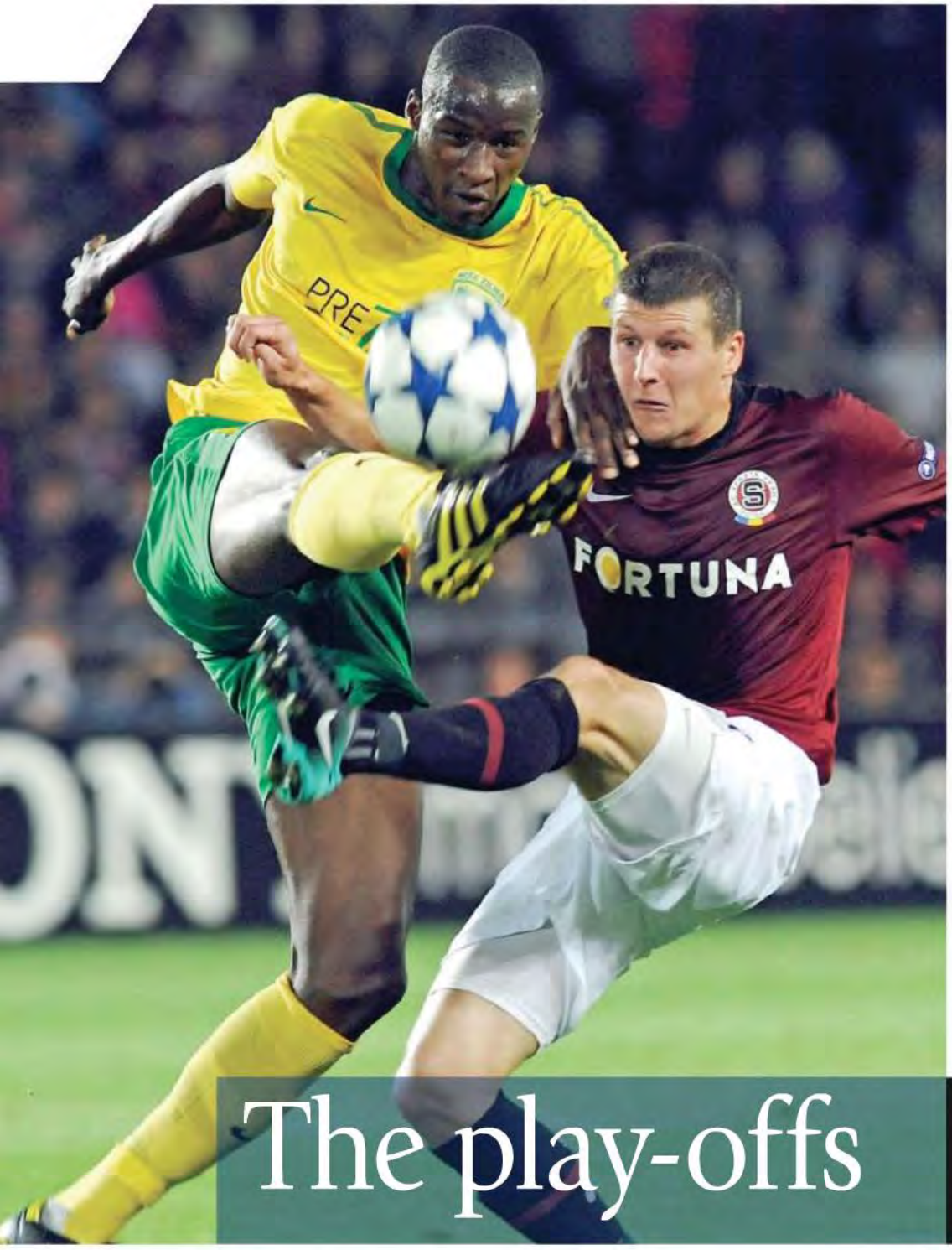

The play-offs

Momodou Ceesay (left) of Zilina gets the better of Sparta Prague's Manuel Pamic. Ceesay scored the Slovak champions' opening goal in a 2-0 victory in the first-leg of their Champions League play-off in the Czech Republic. More information, page 120.

INTERNATIONALS

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Dream debut...Neymar

BRAZIL

Neymar joins greats

Santos' 18-year-old striker Neymar scored on his debut and Alexandre Pato added a second as Brazil beat the USA 2-0 at the New Meadowlands Stadium in East Rutherford.

The teenager joins a select band of players that includes Pele, Jairzinho, Zico and Rivaldo, all of whom scored on their senior *Selecao* bow.

DENMARK

Rommedahl's ton

Dennis Rommedahl scored on his 100th international appearance as Denmark came form two goals down to draw 2-2 with Germany.

Mario Gomez and Patrick Helmes had put the visitors ahead, before the Olympiakos winger and Mads Junker of Dutch club Roda led the fightback.

ENGLAND

Fantastic support

Despite their poor showing at the World Cup in South Africa this summer, a crowd of 72,024 – the largest of the night in Europe – turned up at Wembley for England's friendly against Hungary.

Fulham striker Bobby Zamora, Michael Dawson of Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal duo Kieran Gibbs and Jack Wilshere all made their debuts as England won 2-1.

Adrian Bevington, the director of communications for the Football Association, has said that, after Fabio Capello, the national team "should have an English manager".

FRANCE

World Cup stars out

Having dropped the entire 2010 World Cup squad for his

RESULTS

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS

Group C

Aug 11 - Tallinn
Estonia 2 (Saag 90+1, Piiroja 90+3)
Faroe Islands 1 (Edmundsson 28)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,201. **Ref:** Vucemilovic-Simunovic (Cro)
Estonia: Pareiko - Enar Jaager, Barengrub, Piiroja, Klavan, S Puri (Purje 76), Vassiljev, Dmitrijev, Kruglov (Post 70), Oper (Saag 62), Kink.
Faroe Islands: Nielsen - Naes, Davidsen, Gregersen, Rubeksen, J I Petersen (Lokin 85), Benjaminsen, S Samuelsen (Justinus Hansen 74), a Borg (Poulsen 67), Holst, Edmundsson.

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Estonia	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Italy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
N Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Serbia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Slovenia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Faroe Islands	1	0	0	1	1	2	0

The group winners qualify for the finals; the runners-up will enter the qualifying play-offs, unless they have the best record of all nine group runners-up, in which case they will qualify for the finals automatically

See pages 110-111 for the full Euro 2012 qualifying draw and match schedule

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS

Group K

July 9 - Gaborone
Botswana 1 (Mongala 50)
Chad 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Seechurn (Mts)

July 9 - Lome
Togo 1 (Alouenovo 75)
Malawi 1 (Mwakasungula 18)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Bennett (SAf)

Aug 11 - N'Djamena
Chad 1 (Ezeckiel 74)
Tunisia 3 (Korbi 8, Jemaa 43, Ben Khalfallah 81)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Normandiez (IvC)
Chad: Ndakom (Koulara 28) - Djimé, Aladjim, Niagui, Mahamet (Diallo 53), Altarassem, Djerabe, Hilaire, Marius, Ezeckiel, Karl Max.
Tunisia: Kasraoui - Boussaidi, Yahia, Haggui, Jemal, Nafti, Korbi, Ben Khalfallah, Darragi (Chikhaoui 70; Traoui 76), Dhaouadi (Chermiti 60), Jemaa.

Aug 11 - Blantyre
Malawi 1 (D Banda 73)
Botswana 1 (Ramatlhakwane 62)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Carvalho Helder (Ang)
Malawi: Sanudi - Kafoteka (Nyondo), Kamanga, Mponda, Sangala, Kamwendo (Kanyenda), Kondowe, Ng'ambi, D Banda, Mwafulirwa (V Nyirenda), C Msowoya.
Botswana: Marumo - Thuma, Letsholathebe, Ohilwe, Ramohibidu, Motsepe, Mafoko, Ramatlhakwane, Koko, Selolwane (Tshekiso), Mogorosi (Mokgathi).

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP K	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Botswana	3	2	1	0	3	1	7
Tunisia	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Togo	2	0	2	0	3	3	2
Malawi	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Chad	3	0	1	2	3	6	1

The group winners qualify for the finals. The runners-up will also qualify for the finals if they are among the three runners-up with the best record in the 11 groups

See page 112 for the full 2012 African Nations Cup qualifying draw and match schedule

FRIENDLIES

Wednesday, July 21

July 21 - Macoya
Trinidad & Tobago 4 (Carter 10, 31, K Baptiste 18, Jorsling 67)
Antigua & Barbuda 1 (A Thomas 29)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Brizan (T&T)
Trinidad & Tobago: J M Williams - Hislop (Primus 82), K Williams, Cupid, A Edwards, Noel, Carter (Tinto 66), Jorsling (Winchester 77), Theobald (Hector 82), K Baptiste (Marcano 58), Guerra (Cummings 46).
Antigua & Barbuda: James - Mack, R Christian (J Thomas 79), G Gregory, Griffith (Williams 84), T Thomas (Peters 63), Burton, Robinson (Bleau 71), R Gregory, Dublin, A Thomas (Carr 61).

Wednesday, August 4

Aug 4 - Selebi-Phikwe
Botswana 2 (Mokgathi 9, Ramatlhakwane 14)
Zimbabwe 0
HT: 2-0
Botswana: Marumo - Tshuma, Letsolathebe (Motlhabantle 33), Ramohibidu (Nteja 82), Ohilwe, Natho, Mafoko, Mogorosi (Moloi 58), Mokgathi (Tshekiso 79), Ramatlhakwane, Koko (Ditsupo 82).
Zimbabwe: E Sibanda (T Dube 15) - Ngodzo (Mapemba 46), Banda, Amin, Mukumbi, Meleka (Mudzingwa 76), Katsande, Mteki (Kamunenga 58), B Ncube (Vengesayi 46), Chiutsa (C Sibanda 46), Maroto.

Tuesday, August 10

Aug 10 - Sarajevo
Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 (Ibisevic 9)
Qatar 1 (Abdulmajid pen 60)
HT: 1-0
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Hasagic - Spahic, Nadarevic (Pandza 68), Mravac, Mujdza, Jahic (Ibricic 61), Pjanic (Stilic 78), Misimovic (Alispahic 78), Muslimovic (Medunjanin 61), Dzeko, Ibisevic (Zec 71).
Qatar: Borhan - Al Hamad, Siddiq, Abdulmajid, Semakor, Abdulrahman, Hassan, Al Khalfan, Al Blochi, Rajab, Mohammed.

Aug 10 - London
Italy 0
Ivory Coast 1 (K Toure 55)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,176. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Italy: Sirigu - Motta (Cassani 70), Bonucci, Chiellini, Molinaro, Palombo (Montolivo 81), De Rossi, Pepe (Marchisio 74), Cassano (Rossi 70), Balotelli (Quagliarella 59), Amauri (Borriello 59).
Ivory Coast: Yeboah - Demel (Kafoumba 57), K Toure, Zokora, Tiene, Eboue, Y Toure, Tiote, Kalou (Fae 84), Doumbia (Sagbo 62), Gervinho (E Kone 90+2).

Aug 10 - East Rutherford
United States 0
Brazil 2 (Neymar 29, Alexandre Pato 45)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 77,223. **Ref:** Petrescu (Can)
United States: Howard (Guzan 46) - Spector, Gonzalez, Bocanegra (Goodson 62), Bornstein, Bedoya (Gomez 67), Bradley, Edu, Feilhaber (Kljestan 46), Donovan (Findley 62), Buddle (Altidore 46).
Brazil: Victor - Daniel Alves, Thiago Silva, David Luiz, Andre Santos, Lucas, Ramires (Hernanes 59), Paulo Henrique (Jucilei 89), Robinho (Diego Tardelli 81), Neymar (Ederson 72; Carlos Eduardo 75), Alexandre Pato (Andre 67).

Wednesday, August 11

Aug 11 - Durres
Albania 1 (Salihi 14)
Uzbekistan 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,500. **Ref:** Radovanovic (Mne)
Albania: Beqaj - Dallku, Cana, Curri, Vangjeli (Lila 75), Muzaka (Vila 81), Bulku (Hyka 75), Duro (Bylykbashi 75), Agolli, Salihi (Kapllani 75), Bogdani (Bakaj 55).
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Krushelnitsky, Ismailov, Mullajanov (Filiposyan 62), Shorahmedov, Karpenko, Kapadze (Galiulin 56), Umirzakov (Haydarov 46), Akhmedov, Salomov (Taran 70), Geynrikh (Navkarov 75).

Aug 11 - Algiers
Algeria 1 (Djebbour 85)
Gabon 2 (Cousin 35, P-E Aubameyang 56)
HT: 0-1
Algeria: M'Bolhi - Kadir, Bougherra, Medjani, Mesbah (Abdoun 59), Boudebouz, Yebda (Ziaya 46), Guedioura, Belhadj, Djebbour, Ghezzal.
Gabon: Ovono - Moundounga, Apanga, Manga, W Aubameyang (Moubamba 82), M'Poko (Auzakouma 89), Bamba, Cousin (Poaty 75), Mouloungui, Roguy (Nguema 66), P-E Aubameyang.

Aug 11 - Lisbon
Angola 0
Uruguay 2 (Cavani pen 84, Hernandez 89)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Miguel (Por)
Angola: Lama - Kali, Pataca, Job, Gilberto (Mabina 57), Kivuvu, Adawa, Hugo (Minguito 46), Geraldo (Mateus 46), Dany, Manucho (Jose 78).
Uruguay: Muslera - Victorino, Lugano (Valdez 64), Scotti, M Pereira, Perez (Gargano 46), Arevalo (Gonzalez 90+3), A Pereira, Rodriguez (Eguren 75), Fernandez (Cavani 46), Abreu (Hernandez 72).

Aug 11 - Yerevan
Armenia 1 (Aghvan Mkrtchyan 40)
Iran 3 (Aghili 67, pen 90+5, Nosrati 71)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Kvaratskhelia (Geo)
Armenia: Ghazaryan - Arzumanyan, Hovsepyan, Edigaryan (Grigoryan 89), Aghvan Mkrtchyan (Hambardzumyan 76), Arakelyan, Pachajyan, Manoyan (Artur Voskanyan 90+5), Melkonyan, Pizzelli (Dashyan 76), Movsisyan (Manucharyan 14).
Iran: Rahmati - Nouri, J Hosseini, Aghili, Ashjari (Nosrati 46), K Heydari (M Hosseini 78), Haddadifar (Zenidpour 46), Ashoubi (Mobali 46), Nekounam, Ansarifard (Nowroozi 74), G Rezaei (Ali Asgar 90).
Sent off: Nekounam 78min.

Aug 11 - Klagenfurt
Austria 0
Switzerland 1 (Costanzo 73)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Perez (Spa)
Austria: Gratzei - Dag (Klein 46), Prodl, Pogatetz, Fuchs, Baumgartlinger, Schiemer, Wolf (Korkmaz 46), Junuzovic (Linz 79), Jantscher (Holzl 79), Hoffer (Harnik 46).
Switzerland: Benaglio - Lichtsteiner, Affolter, Grichting (Eggimann 46), Ziegler, Shaqiri (Padalino 58), Inler, Schwegler (Fernandes 81), Stocker (Bunjaku 75), Yakin (Costanzo 71), Derdiyok (Ben Khalifa 71).

Aug 11 - Baku
Azerbaijan 1 (Mammadov 42)
Kuwait 1 (Al Mutawa 82)
HT: 1-0

Aug 11 - Porto-Novo
Benin 0
Niger 0

Aug 11 - La Paz
Bolivia 1 (Galindo 63)
Colombia 1 (Bacca 37)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Favale (Arg)
Bolivia: D Vaca (Lampe 46) - Hoyos, Rodriguez, L Gutierrez, I Garcia, Robles (Flores 46), N Suarez, J Vaca, Cardozo (Galindo 46), Da Rosa (A Sanchez 79), Pena (Cabrera 46; A Reyes 49).
Colombia: B Castillo - Valdes, Valencia, Henriquez, Velez, Viafara, J Restrepo, L Arias (Anchico 59), Marrugo (C Arias 75), Bacca (Uribe 55), D Moreno (Pabon 62).

Aug 11 - Senlis, France
Burkina Faso 3 (Dagano 17, Panandetiguiri 30, Alain Traore 81)
Congo 0
HT: 2-0
Burkina Faso: Diakite - Gnanou, Agbe, Panandetiguiri, C Kabore, Koffi, Alain Traore, Mandela, Pitroipa, Dagano, B Kone.
Congo: Mouko - N'Ganga, N'Dinga (M'Bizi), Abdoulaye (Okiele), Kimbembe (Mbilampassi), Mouithys (Dore), Moussilou (Mpassi), Aubey (Mouaya), Douniama (Sembolo), Louhoungou, Malonga.

Aug 11 - Nanjing
China 1 (Yu Hai 9)
Bahrain 1 (Abdullatif 17)
HT: 1-1
China: Yang Zhi (Zeng Cheng) - He Yang, Wang Qiang, Zhao Xuri, Hao Junmin (Zhu Ting), Deng Zhuoxiang, Du Wei (Zhao Peng), Yang Hao (Zhang Linpeng), Rong Hao, Yan Xiangchuang (Yu Hanchao), Yu Hai (Feng Renliang).

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first game in charge, new France coach Laurent Blanc got off to a losing start as his side were beaten 2-1 in Oslo.

With Stephane Ruffier, Adil Rami, Aly Cissokho, Charles N'Zogbia, Yann M'Vila and Guillaume Hoarau all making their international debuts, Hatem Ben Arfa put the visitors ahead, but Norway replied with two goals from Erik Huseklepp of Brann.

Nicolas Anelka has been banned for 18 matches by the French Football Federation over his conduct in South Africa during the summer. Anelka was sent home after a row with the then-coach Raymond Domenech and, in protest, the France squad boycotted a training session.

Captain Patrice Evra was banned for five matches for his part in the revolt, Franck Ribery was suspended for three and Jeremy Toulalan for one.

GERMANY

Holders eliminated

The European Under-21 holders are out of the 2011 championship after Germany lost 4-1 away to Iceland in a qualifying-group game.

Germany coach Rainer Adrian said: "This was supposed to be a fresh start, but due to our carelessness this horrific result was the outcome."

HOLLAND

Lens' scoring start

Playing their first match since the World Cup Final in July, Holland were held 1-1 in Donetsk by the Ukraine.

Jeremain Lens of PSV opened the scoring on his debut, but Oleksandr Aliyev of Lokomotiv Moscow equalised.

Chelsea defender Jeffrey Bruma was among those who made their debut for Holland.

Holland hero...Lens

Aug 11 - Larnaca
Cyprus 1 (M Konstantinou 4)
Andorra 0
HT: 1-0
Cyprus: Georgallides - Ntomprasinovits (Charalambous 46), Satsias (Makrides 57), Christou (Merkis 46), Michael, Charalambides (Poursaitidis 72), Elia (Maragkos 72), M Konstantinou, Alonefitis, Okkas (Ephraim 78), Avraam.
Andorra: Gomes - Rubio, Escura, Silva, I Lima (Sonejee 50), Andorra (Ayala 53), Vieira (Mejias 69), C Martinez (Bousenine 85), Pujol (A Martinez 85), Gomez, Moreno (Jimenez 60).

Aug 11 - Liberec
Czech Republic 4 (Bednar 49, Fenin 54, Pospech 74, Necid 77)
Latvia 1 (Cauna 90+2)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 7,456. **Ref:** Dankovskyi (Ukr)
Czech Republic: Drobny - Pospech, Hubnik, Kadlec, Pudil (Rajnoch 46), Plasil (Cerny 78), Hubschman, Polak (Holek 62), Rosicky (Stajner 61), Fenin (Lafata 62), Bednar (Necid 61).
Latvia: Vanins - Klava, Ivanovs, Gorkss, Mihadjuks, Pereplotkins (Solonicins 73), Rafalskis (Fertovs 80), J Laizans (Lazdins 60), Rubins (Zigajevs 46), Verpakovskis (Grebis 69), Karlsons (Cauna 60).

Aug 11 - Copenhagen
Denmark 2 (Rommedahl 74, Junker 87)
Germany 2 (Gomez 19, Helmes 73)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 19,071. **Ref:** Kelly (Rlr)
Denmark: T Sorensen - Jacobsen, Kjaer, Agger, S Poulsen (Thomsen 28), M Jensen (Silberbauer 46), Kvist (Lorentzen 67), Eriksen, Rommedahl, Pedersen (Junker 55), Enevoldsen (Schone 46).
Germany: Wiese - Beck (Riether 56), Boateng (Schulz 78), Tasci, Schafer, Gentner, Hitzlsperger (Helmes 66), Trasch, Kroos, Marin (Hunt 56), Gomez.

Aug 11 - Cairo
Egypt 6 (Ali 2, 34, Fathy 41, Aboutraika 44, Hassan 49, Gedo 67)
DR Congo 3 (Ilunga 17, Matumona 54, pen 69)
HT: 4-1
Egypt: El Sayed (El Hadary) - Al Muhammadi, Fathalla (Salem), Gomaa, Moawad (Abdel Shafy), Fathy, Ghali (El Solayya), Aboutraika (Hassan), Eid, Gedo, Ali (Mekki).

Aug 11 - London
England 2 (Gerrard 69, 73)
Hungary 1 (Jagielka og 63)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 72,024. **Ref:** Lannoy (Fra)
England: Hart - G Johnson, Jagielka, Terry (Dawson 46), A Cole (Gibbs 46), Barry, Lampard (Zamora 46), Walcott (Young 46), Gerrard (Wilshere 82), A Johnson, Rooney (Milner 66).
Hungary: Kiraly - Liptak (Komlosi 55), Vanczak (Laczko 46), Juhasz, Szelesi, Vadocz, Dzsudzsak (Koman 46), Elek (B Toth 59), Huszti (Hajnal 46), Gera, Rudolf (Priskin 83).

Aug 11 - Turku
Finland 1 (Kompany og 13)
Belgium 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 7,451. **Ref:** Hamer (Lux)
Finland: Fredrikson - Pasanen, Lampi, Moisander, Heikkinen (Lyyski 87), Hamalainen (Vayrynen 38), Sparv, R Eremenko (Tainio 46), Porokara (Sjolund 62), A Eremenko (Litmanen 62), Forsseli (Roiha 80).
Belgium: Bailly - G Gillet, Kompany, Vermaelen, Lombaerts (Pocognoli 46), Witsel (Vleminckx 73), Vertonghen, Van Damme (Defour 46), De Bruyne (Lepoint 46; Thijs 61), Bentake (Lukaku 66), Hazard.

Aug 11 - Reykjavik
Iceland 1 (R Gislason 20)
Liechtenstein 1 (Michael Stocklasa 69)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Buttimer (Rlr)
Iceland: Arason - Ottesen (R Sigurdsson 49), K O Sigurdsson, I Sigurdsson, Steinsson (Adalsteinsson 74), Smarason (Snorrason 84), Skulason (Villhjalmsson 77), R Gislason, A E Gunnarsson (Kristjansson 64), Gudjohnsen (V Gunnarsson 64), Helguson.
Liechtenstein: Bicer - Ritzberger, Michael Stocklasa, D'Elia (Christen 46), Oehri (Eberle 46), Martin Stocklasa, Wieser, Erne (Hasler 64), Frick, Vogt (Rechsteiner 46), Polverino.

Aug 11 - Astana
Kazakhstan 3 (Karpovich 20, Zhumaskaliyev 43, Al Alavi og 62)
Oman 1 (Al Hosni 64)
HT: 2-0

Aug 11 - Kaunas
Lithuania 0
Belarus 2 (V Hleb pen 49, 90+1)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,500. **Ref:** Satchi (Mol)
Lithuania: Arlauskis - Kijanskas, Skerla (Zelmikas 46), Stankevicius, Semberas (Pilibaitis 80), Radavicius (Klimavicius 46), Ivaskevicius (Savenas 46), Mikoliunas (Luksa 62), D Cesnauskis (Kalonas 55), Sernas, Danilevicius.
Belarus: Amelchenko (Zhevnov 46) - Shitov, Martinovich, Omelyanchuk, Molosh (Yurevich 46), Kulchy (Kutuzov 46), Tigorev, V Hleb, A Hleb (Kisiyak 46), Putsilo (Zhevnerov 84), Rodionov (Kryvets 60).

Aug 11 - Marignane, France
Mali 0
Guinea 2 (Zayatte 34, Constant 52)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Abdelkarim (Fra)
Mali: S Diakite (Sissoko) - Diamoutene (Berthe), A Maiga, Tamboura (A Sidibe), D Diakite (I Keita), B Traore, Sow (Fane), A Traore (A Keita), S Diarra (Y Diarra), Samassa, M Maiga.
Guinea: N Yattara (Kone) - Constant (D Bangoura), I Camara (A Cisse), Zayatte (H Balde), Ibrahima Bangoura (Sacko), Ismael Bangoura, I Yattara (Florentin), A Diallo, I Traore, Bah, Oumar.

Aug 11 - Valletta
Malta 1 (M Mifsud 47)
Macedonia 1 (Trickovski 36)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Rossi (SaM)
Malta: Hogg - Herrera, A Agius, Caruana, Mamo (Failla 46), Sciberras (R Fenech 66), Pace, Briffa (Cohen 72), Bogdanovic, S Bajada (P Fenech 80), M Mifsud.
Macedonia: Pacovski (Nuredinoski 79) - G Popov, Lazarevski (Sikov 63), I Mitreski (Grncarov 56), Noveski, Georgievski (Gligorov 75), Despotovski, Trickovski (Stojkov 55), Gjurovski (Alimi 66), Pandev, Naumoski (Ibraimi 72).

Aug 11 - Nouakchott
Mauritania 0
Palestine 0

Aug 11 - Mexico City
Mexico 1 (J Hernandez 10)
Spain 1 (Silva 90+1)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Moreno (Pan)
Mexico: G Ochoa (Corona 56) - Juarez, F Rodriguez, Moreno (Lopez 60), Salcido, Marquez (Aguilar 57), Torrado, G Dos Santos (E Hernandez 66), Vela (Esqueda 57), Guardado (Pinto 70), J Hernandez (Barrera 46).
Spain: Casillas (Valdes 46) - Arbeloa, Puyol (Sergio Ramos 46), Marchena (Pique 65), Monreal, Bruno (Pedro 71), Busquets (Xavi 61), Cazorla, Fabregas (Xabi Alonso 46), Mata (Silva 46), Llorente (Jesus Navas 46).

Aug 11 - Chisinau
Moldova 0
Georgia 0
Ref: Shvetsov (Ukr)
Moldova: Stanislav Namasco - Bordian, Bulgaru, Racu, Boret, Tigirlas, Cebotaru, Zmeu (Cojocari 66), Josan (Doros 73), Andronic (Suvorov 61), Bugaiov (Frunza 46).
Georgia: Loria - Lobjanidze, Asatiani (Salukvadze 69), Kaladze, Amisulashvili (Kvirkvelia 46), Khizanishvili, Kobiashvili, Gogua (Aptsiauri 64), Iashvili (Gelashvili 46), Siradze (Merebashvili 56), Dvalishvili (Koshkadze 77). *Sent off: Lobjanidze 75min.*

Aug 11 - Podgorica
Montenegro 2 (Dalovic 42, 59)
Northern Ireland 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Jovanetic (Ser)
Montenegro: M Bozovic - Pavicevic (D Bozovic 52), Jovanovic (Savic 76), Dzudovic, Pekovic (Novakovic 62), V Bozovic, Pejovic (Tomasevic 56), Zverotic (Beciraj 83), Vukcevic, Dalovic (Delibasic 78), Vucinic.
Northern Ireland: Taylor - Little, McGivern (Healy 69), J Evans, Craigan, Baird (Feeney 46), Davis, Clingan (Norwood 65), Paterson (C Evans 46), Lafferty (Gorman 59), Brunt (McCann 46).

Aug 11 - Rabat
Morocco 2 (Hadji 65, 79)
Equatorial Guinea 1 (Anselmo 38)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Haimoudi (Alg)
Morocco: Lamyaghri - Benattia (Karouchi 85), Bassir, Mahdoufi, Benzoukan (Berrabeh 70), Taarabt (Hadji 57), Boussoufa, Ahmadi (Erraki 85), Chamakh (Baha 82), Harmach, Zhar (Alloudi 57).
Equatorial Guinea: Pensi - Sipoto, Juvenal, Evuy, Esono, Anselmo, Aguirre (Victor 85), Daw, Mba, Bedro, Mocia (Mitogo 70). *Sent off: Juvenal 55min.*

Aug 11 - Maputo
Mozambique 2 (Domingues pen 9, Miro 51)
Swaziland 1 (Siza Dlamini 29)
HT: 1-1

Aug 11 - Oslo
Norway 2 (Huseklepp 51, 71)
France 1 (Ben Arfa 48)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,165. **Ref:** Velasco Carballo (Spa)
Norway: Knudsen - Hogli, Hangeland, Waehler (Demidov 46), J A Riise, Huseklepp, B H Riise (Skjelbred 87), Hauger (Jenssen 90), Grindheim (Solli 62), Gamst Pedersen, Abdellaoue (Ruud 46).
France: Ruffier - Fanni, Mexes, Rami, Cissokho, Sissoko (Ben Arfa 46), M'Vila (Cabaye 74), Nasri (Briand 79), N'Zogbia (L Diarra 46), Remy (Menez 46), Hoarau (Benzema 61).

Aug 11 - Panama City
Panama 3 (Tejada 75, B Perez 88, Aguilar 90)
Venezuela 1 (Vizcarrondo 70)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Quesada (CR)
Panama: Penedo - Machado, R Torres, Baloy, Rivera (Gomez 76), A Henriquez (Jimenez 90), Godoy, Cooper, Barahona (Davis 30), Tejada (Aguilar 86), B Perez.
Venezuela: Morales - Rosales (Camacho 75), Bustamante, Vizcarrondo, Granados, Rincon (F Flores 72), Lucena, Arango, Maldonado (Moreno 69), Fedor (S Rondon 69), Chourio (Orozco 69).

Aug 11 - Asuncion
Paraguay 2 (Vera 8, Riveros 73)
Costa Rica 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 16,162. **Ref:** Beligoy (Arg)
Paraguay: Villar - Bonet (Riveros 59), Da Silva (J C Caceres 49), Alcaraz (Veron 49), Caniza, Vera, Ortigoza, Torres, Santa Cruz (E Benitez 49), Haedo Valdez (Martinez 49), O Cardozo (Barrios 49).
Costa Rica: Alvarado - Gamboa, Sequeira, Umana, Miller (Meneses 87), Cubero (E Granados 79), Guzman (Russell 55), Monge (J Martinez 61), Borges, Ruiz, Saborio (Sanchez 82).

Aug 11 - Szczecin
Poland 0
Cameroon 3 (Eto'o 30, 53, Aboubakar 85)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 17,000. **Ref:** Asumaa (Fin)
Poland: Fabianski (Tyton 46) - Wojtkowiak (Kowalczyk 38), Glik, Zewlakow, Sadlok, Blaszczykowski, Murawski (Mierzejewski 58), Dudka (Matuszczyk 72), Obraniak (Peszko 78), Lewandowski, Pawel Brozek (Rybus 46).
Cameroon: N'Dy Assembe - Assou-Ekotto, Bassong, N'Koulou (Bikey 65), Binya, Chedjou (Matip 76), Makoun (Mandjeck 70), Bedimo (Bong 82), Ndjeng, Choupo-Moting (Bienvenu 59), Eto'o (Aboubakar 80).

Aug 11 - Dublin
Republic of Ireland 0
Argentina 1 (Di Maria 20)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 45,200. **Ref:** Rasmussen (Den)
Rep Ireland: Given - McShane, O'Shea, Dunne, Kilbane (Cunningham 56), Fahey (Treacy 77), Green, Andrews (Gibson 67), Duff, Sheridan (Keogh 56), Keane.
Argentina: Romero - Burdisso (Zabaleta 46), Demichelis, Samuel (Coloccini 84), Heinze (E Insua 72), Mascherano, Banega, Gago, Di Maria (Gutierrez 75), Messi (Lavezzi 58), Higuain (D Milito 46).

Aug 11 - St Petersburg
Russia 1 (Shirokov 6)
Bulgaria 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 14,000
Russia: Akinfeev - Anyukov (Kolodin 46), V Berezutsky, Ignashevich, Zhirkov (Bilyaletdinov 46), Semshov, Shirokov, Zyryanov, Pogrebnyak (Pavlyuchenko 46), Arshavin (Sychev 80), Torbinsky (Dzagoev 70).
Bulgaria: Mihailov - Ilian Stoyanov, Angelov (Genchev 61), Yankov (Dimitrov 85), Bozhinov (Rangelov 46), Manolin, Milanov, M Petrov (Micanski 76), I Ivanov, S Petrov (Sirakov 89), Popov (Kamburov 55).

Aug 11 - Riyadh
Saudi Arabia 1 (Kariri 43)
Togo 0
HT: 1-0
Togo: Tchagouni - Mango, Sadate, Akakpo, Labo, Ahodikpe, Camara, Dove, Boukari, Gakpe, Abraw.

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MACEDONIA

Keeper crocked

First-choice goalkeeper Tome Pacovski will miss the opening months of Macedonia's Euro 2012 qualifying campaign after breaking his right leg playing for Germinal Beerschot against Anderlecht in the Belgian league.

The 28-year-old is expected to be sidelined for up to six months.

Century...Keane

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Di Maria crashes party

Tottenham Hotspur striker Robbie Keane won his 100th cap as Ireland played their first game at their new £330million Aviva Stadium home, but Argentina spoiled the party with the only goal of the game from Angel Di Maria.

Assistant manager Marco Tardelli took charge of the Irish team after Giovanni Trapattoni was admitted to hospital for abdominal surgery.

Winner...Russia celebrate

RUSSIA

Recalled Shirokov finds himself at home

Dick Advocaat made a winning start as Russia coach, with Zenit St Petersburg's Roman Shirokov – who collected his first cap since a dreadful performance against Spain

Aug 11 - Dakar
Senegal 1 (M B Diouf 47)
Cape Verde Islands 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Lemghambodj (Mta)
Senegal: K Ndiaye (Coundoul 46) - Daf, Diakhate, Mangane, J Mendy, R Gomis, Tavares (Thioune 66), Dia (Sow 46), N Ndiaye (Fall 80), M B Diouf (S Camara 76), Niang (P D Cisse 76).
Cape Verde Islands: F Tavares - Agviar (Ramos 58), Silva, F Valera, Newes (A Tavares), Stopira, Moreno (Soares 69), Furtado (A Valera 84), Macedo (Graca 58), Borges (Royor 78), Gomes.

Aug 11 - Belgrade
Serbia 0
Greece 1 (Salpigidis 45)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Teixeira Vitienes (Spa)
Serbia: Duricic - Ivanovic, Subotic, Vidic, Obradovic (Kolarov 46), Petrovic (Kacar 58), Milijas (Ninkovic 46), Kuzmanovic, Jovanovic (Mrda 65), Krasic (Z Tosic 46), Zigic (Pantelic 74).
Greece: Sifakis - Vyntra (Maniatis 80), Kyrgiakos (A Papadopoulos 46), Papastathopoulos, Spiropoulos, Torosidis (Kafes 65), Katsouranis (I Papadopoulos 74), Karagounis (Marinos 87), Ninis, Salpigidis (Gekas 46), Samaras.

Aug 11 - Bratislava
Slovakia 1 (Stoch 50)
Croatia 1 (Jelavic 54)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 6,366. **Ref:** Matejek (Cze)
Slovakia: Mucha - Pekarik, Skrtel, Salata, Hubocan, Weiss (Jendrisek 68), Karhan (Zabavnik 84), Kucka (Kopunek 46), Stoch, Holosko (Hamsik 46), Sestak (Vittek 68; Cech 72).
Croatia: Runje - Srna, Corluka, Schildenfeld, Simunic, Vukojevic, Rakitic (Dujmovic 71), Mandzukic (Petric 46), Kranjcar (Eduardo 46), Modric, Olic (Jelavic 46).

Aug 11 - Ljubljana
Slovenia 2 (Dedic 78, Ljubijankic 90)
Australia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 16,135. **Ref:** Tagliavento (Ita)
Slovenia: S Handanovic - Brecko, Mavric, Cesar, Jokic (Ilic 80), Radosavljevic, Koren, Birsa (Ilicic 68), Kirm (Vrsic 85), Matavz (Dedic 46), Novakovic (Ljubijankic 74).
Australia: Schwarzer (Federici 46) - Neill, North, Wilkshire, Carney, Burns (Rukavytsya 70), Holman, Jedinak (Holland 88), Valeri, Garcia, Djite (Vidosic 56).

Aug 11 - Johannesburg
South Africa 1 (Mphela 42)
Ghana 0
HT: 1-0
South Africa: Khune - Ngcongca (Gaxa 64), Gould, Mokoena (Sangweni 46), Masilela, Sibaya, Khuboni (Jali 87), Pienaar (Letsholonyane 73), Tshabalala (Klate 68), Parker, Mphela (Ngcobo 79).
Ghana: Kingson (Agyei 46) - Inkoom, Afful, Jonathan Mensah, L Addy (Addai 83), Annan (Kumordzi 60), Draman (Antwi 60), A Ayew (Bekoe 60), Agyemang-Badu, Asamoah, Gyan (Osei 71).

Aug 11 - Suwon
South Korea 2 (Yoon Bitgaram 16, Choi Hyo-jin 44)
Nigeria 1 (Odemwingie 26)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 40,331. **Ref:** Nishimura (Jap)
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae (Jung Sung-ryong 27) - Choi Hyo-jin, Kwak Tae-hwi (Hong Jeong-ho 46), Kim Young-kwon, Lee Young-pyo, Lee Jung-soo (Cho Yong-hyung 77), Park Ji-sung (Lee Seung-yeoul 46), Ki Sung-yueng (Baek Ji-hoon 61), Cho Young-cheol, Yoon Bitgaram, Park Chu-young (Kim Bo-kyung 72).
Nigeria: Aiyenugba - Suswam (Emmanuel 71), Nwabili, Sodje, Shittu, Eneji (Saka 80), Etuhu, Okoronkwo (Akpala 59), Martins, Odemwingie, K Uche (Ideye 32).

Aug 11 - Stockholm
Sweden 3 (Ibrahimovic 4, Bajrami 39, Toivonen 56)
Scotland 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 25,249. **Ref:** Rocchi (Ita)
Sweden: Isaksson - Lustig (S Larsson 46), Mellberg, Majstorovic, Safari, A Svensson (Wendt 73), Wernbloom (Kallstrom 46), Elmander (Berg 78), Toivonen, Bajrami (Wilhelmsson 64), Ibrahimovic (Hysen 59).
Scotland: McGregor - Broadfoot (Whittaker 75), Kenneth, Berra, Wallace, Robson (Iwelumo 78), D Fletcher, Thomson (Robertson 54), Adam (Morrison 64), McFadden, S Fletcher (Boyd 64).

Aug 11 - Dar es Salaam
Tanzania 1 (Ngasa 59)
Kenya 1 (Mariga 13)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Mbaga (Tan)
Tanzania: Hassan - Nsajigwa, Yondan (Morris 46), A Kassim, Ngasa, Bakari, Aziz (Homoud 75), Tegete (Mgosi 26), Seleman (S Kassim 48), Rajab (Iddi 66), Haroub.
Kenya: Obungu - G Owino, J Owino, Wahome, Mzee (Situma 75), Ochieng, Mariga, Odhiambo (Kimani 55), Oliech, Baraza (Wanga 55), Omondi (Were 75).

Aug 11 - Nonthaburi
Thailand 1 (Sarayoot 29)
Singapore 0
HT: 1-0
Thailand: Kawin - Chonlatit, Rangsan (Theeratorn), Nattaporn, Suttinan, Puritat (Laeng), Datsakorn (Pichitpong), Suchao, Wichaya, Sarayoot (Ronnachai), Teerasil.
Singapore: Sunny - Baharuddin, Khaizan (Yunos), Shi Jaiyi, Duric (Casmir), Nawaz (Wilkinson), Shah (Bennett), Fahrudhin (Sulaiman), Ishak, Amri (Masturi), Harun.

Aug 11 - Macoya
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (Jorsling 29)
Jamaica 3 (Richards 8, Austin pen 31, Bryan 52)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 4,500. **Ref:** Taylor (Bar)
Trinidad & Tobago: J M Williams - K Williams, Hislop, Mitchell (Cyrus 54), A Edwards, Noel, Hector (Jamerson 78), Carter (Tinto 72), Daniel (Jagdeosingh 66), K Baptiste (Marcano 54), Jorsling.
Jamaica: Ricketts - Edwards (Devon Williams 90), J Taylor, Thomas (Fisher 89), Dicoy Williams, R Johnson (Forbes 78), Vernan (Cousins 88), Bryan (Hodges 66), Smith, Richards (A Reid 80), Austin.
Sent off: Austin 78min.

Aug 11 - Istanbul
Turkey 2 (Emre Belozoglu pen 82, Arda 86)
Romania 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Mazic (Ser)
Turkey: Volkan Demirel - Gokhan Gonul, Servet, Hakan Balta, Ismail, Emre Belozoglu, Mehmet Aurelio (Selcuk Sahin 69), Hamit Altintop (Sercan 69), Nuri (Kazim-Richards 46), Arda (Nihat 89), Mevlut (Tuncay 46).
Romania: Lobont - Dananae, Tamas, Chivu (Galamaz 61), Rat, Cocis, Radoi, Florescu, Deac (Nicolita 77; Tanase 89), Bilasco (Marica 51), D Niculae (Stancu 88).

Aug 11 - Kampala
Uganda 1 (Sserumaga 39)
Zambia 1 (Masaba og 22)
HT: 1-1
Uganda: Odongkara - Masaba (Walulya), Walusimbi, Owino, Sekagya (Isinde), Wasswa, Wagaluka, Kasule (Kaweesa), G Massa (Umony), Sserumaga (Sentongo), Bengo (Matovu).

Aug 11 - Donetsk
Ukraine 1 (Aliyev 74)
Holland 1 (Lens 73)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)
Ukraine: Pyatov - Fedetskyi (Oliynyk 77; Cheberyachko 90), Chygrynskyi, Rakytskyi, Romanchuk, Rotan (Kobin 36), Aliyev, Tymoshchuk, Konoplyanka, Shevchenko (Selezniov 57), Voronin (Milevskyi 46).
Holland: Vorm - Marcellis, Bruma (Loovens 84), Vlaar, Anita (Pieters 46), Lens, Brama (Maduro 46), Janssen, S De Jong (Fer 63), Emanuelson, Van Wolfswinkel (Beerens 70).

Aug 11 - Llanelli
Wales 5 (Cotterill 34, Ledley pen 47, King 55, Williams 78, Bellamy 82)
Luxembourg 1 (Kitenge 44)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 4,504. **Ref:** Gestranius (Fin)
Wales: Hennessey (Myhill 46) - Ricketts, Morgan, Williams (Eardley 85), Gunter, Cotterill (Crofts 82), Stock (King 46), Ledley, Bellamy, Morison, Earnshaw (Vaughan 46).
Luxembourg: Joubert - Kintziger, Schnell, Hoffmann, Mutsch, Da Mota (Laterza 68), Gerson (Pedro 60), Peters, Bettmer (Bernard 86), Janisch (Collette 79), Kitenge. *Sent off: Mutsch 77min.*

Wednesday, August 18

Aug 18 - Addis Ababa
Ethiopia 0
Kenya 3 (Wanga 13, 55, Muaka 75)
HT: 0-1

2011 ASIAN CUP FINALS

To be staged in Qatar, January 7-29, 2011

Group stage fixtures

Group A

Jan 7	Qatar v Uzbekistan
Jan 8	Kuwait v China
Jan 12	Uzbekistan v Kuwait
Jan 12	China v Qatar
Jan 16	Qatar v Kuwait
Jan 16	China v Uzbekistan

Group B

Jan 9	Japan v Jordan
Jan 9	Saudi Arabia v Syria
Jan 13	Jordan v Saudi Arabia
Jan 13	Syria v Japan
Jan 17	Saudi Arabia v Japan
Jan 17	Jordan v Syria

Group C

Jan 10	India v Australia
Jan 10	South Korea v Bahrain
Jan 14	Australia v South Korea
Jan 14	Bahrain v India
Jan 18	South Korea v India
Jan 18	Australia v Bahrain

Group D

Jan 11	North Korea v UAE
Jan 11	Iraq v Iran
Jan 15	Iran v North Korea
Jan 15	UAE v Iraq
Jan 19	Iraq v North Korea
Jan 19	UAE v Iran

Top two in each group qualify for quarter-finals

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS

Draw & match schedule

Group A

Austria
Azerbaijan
Belgium
Germany
Kazakhstan
Turkey

03.09.10	Belgium v Germany
03.09.10	Kazakhstan v Turkey
07.09.10	Austria v Kazakhstan
07.09.10	Germany v Azerbaijan
07.09.10	Turkey v Belgium
08.10.10	Austria v Azerbaijan
08.10.10	Germany v Turkey
08.10.10	Kazakhstan v Belgium
12.10.10	Azerbaijan v Turkey
12.10.10	Belgium v Austria
12.10.10	Kazakhstan v Germany
25.03.11	Austria v Belgium
25.03.11	Germany v Kazakhstan
29.03.11	Belgium v Azerbaijan
29.03.11	Turkey v Austria
03.06.11	Austria v Germany
03.06.11	Belgium v Turkey
03.06.11	Kazakhstan v Azerbaijan
07.06.11	Azerbaijan v Germany
02.09.11	Azerbaijan v Belgium
02.09.11	Germany v Austria
02.09.11	Turkey v Kazakhstan
06.09.11	Austria v Turkey
06.09.11	Azerbaijan v Kazakhstan
07.10.11	Azerbaijan v Austria

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at Euro 2008 – scoring the decisive goal as Bulgaria were beaten 1-0 in St Petersburg.

SOUTH AFRICA

A new era begins

Pitso Mosimane's reign as coach of *Bafana Bafana* got off to a successful beginning in Johannesburg as Katlego Mphela scored the only goal of the game against World Cup quarter-finalists Ghana.

Scorer...Mphela

SOUTH KOREA

Lee bids farewell

Goals from debutant Yoon Bitgaram of Gyeongnam and Seoul's Choi Hyo-jin gave new South Korea coach Cho Kwang-rae victory as his side beat Nigeria 2-1. Peter Odemwingie scored for the visitors, beating Suwon Bluewings goalkeeper Lee Woon-jae who was playing his last international game.

SPAIN

Still going strong

David Silva's stoppage-time equaliser earned the world champions a 1-1 draw in Mexico and extended Carlos Marchena's record of 56 international appearances for *La Roja* without defeat.

Spain coach Vicente Del Bosque gave a debut to Villarreal midfielder Bruno Soriano.

Comeback...Spain in Mexico

07.10.11 Belgium v Kazakhstan
07.10.11 Turkey v Germany
11.10.11 Germany v Belgium
11.10.11 Kazakhstan v Austria
11.10.11 Turkey v Azerbaijan

Group B

Andorra
Armenia
Macedonia
Republic of Ireland
Russia
Slovakia

03.09.10 Andorra v Russia
03.09.10 Armenia v Republic of Ireland
03.09.10 Slovakia v Macedonia
07.09.10 Macedonia v Armenia
07.09.10 Republic of Ireland v Andorra
07.09.10 Russia v Slovakia
08.10.10 Andorra v Macedonia
08.10.10 Armenia v Slovakia
08.10.10 Republic of Ireland v Russia
12.10.10 Armenia v Andorra
12.10.10 Macedonia v Russia
12.10.10 Slovakia v Republic of Ireland
26.03.11 Andorra v Slovakia
26.03.11 Armenia v Russia
26.03.11 Republic of Ireland v Macedonia
04.06.11 Macedonia v Republic of Ireland
04.06.11 Russia v Armenia
04.06.11 Slovakia v Andorra
02.09.11 Andorra v Armenia
02.09.11 Republic of Ireland v Slovakia
02.09.11 Russia v Macedonia
06.09.11 Macedonia v Andorra
06.09.11 Russia v Republic of Ireland
06.09.11 Slovakia v Armenia
07.10.11 Andorra v Republic of Ireland
07.10.11 Armenia v Macedonia
07.10.11 Slovakia v Russia
11.10.11 Macedonia v Slovakia
11.10.11 Republic of Ireland v Armenia
11.10.11 Russia v Andorra

Group C

Estonia
Faroe Islands
Italy
Northern Ireland
Serbia
Slovenia

11.08.10 Estonia v Faroe Islands..... 2-1
03.09.10 Estonia v Italy
03.09.10 Faroe Islands v Serbia
03.09.10 Slovenia v Northern Ireland
07.09.10 Italy v Faroe Islands
07.09.10 Serbia v Slovenia
08.10.10 Northern Ireland v Italy
08.10.10 Serbia v Estonia
08.10.10 Slovenia v Faroe Islands
12.10.10 Estonia v Slovenia
12.10.10 Faroe Islands v Northern Ireland
12.10.10 Italy v Serbia
25.03.11 Serbia v Northern Ireland
25.03.11 Slovenia v Italy
29.03.11 Estonia v Serbia
29.03.11 Northern Ireland v Slovenia
03.06.11 Faroe Islands v Slovenia
03.06.11 Italy v Estonia
07.06.11 Faroe Islands v Estonia
10.08.11 Northern Ireland v Faroe Islands
02.09.11 Faroe Islands v Italy
02.09.11 Northern Ireland v Serbia
02.09.11 Slovenia v Estonia
06.09.11 Estonia v Northern Ireland
06.09.11 Italy v Slovenia
06.09.11 Serbia v Faroe Islands
07.10.11 Northern Ireland v Estonia
07.10.11 Serbia v Italy
11.10.11 Italy v Northern Ireland
11.10.11 Slovenia v Serbia

Group D

Albania
Belarus
Bosnia-Herzegovina
France
Luxembourg
Romania

03.09.10 France v Belarus
03.09.10 Luxembourg v Bosnia-Herzegovina
03.09.10 Romania v Albania
07.09.10 Albania v Luxembourg
07.09.10 Belarus v Romania
07.09.10 Bosnia-Herzegovina v France
08.10.10 Albania v Bosnia-Herzegovina
08.10.10 Luxembourg v Belarus
09.10.10 France v Romania
12.10.10 Belarus v Albania
12.10.10 France v Luxembourg
25.03.11 Luxembourg v France
26.03.11 Albania v Belarus
26.03.11 Bosnia-Herzegovina v Romania
29.03.11 Romania v Luxembourg
03.06.11 Belarus v France
03.06.11 Romania v Bosnia-Herzegovina
07.06.11 Belarus v Luxembourg
07.06.11 Bosnia-Herzegovina v Albania
02.09.11 Albania v France
02.09.11 Belarus v Bosnia-Herzegovina
02.09.11 Luxembourg v Romania
06.09.11 Bosnia-Herzegovina v Belarus
06.09.11 Luxembourg v Albania
06.09.11 Romania v France
07.10.11 Bosnia-Herzegovina v Luxembourg
07.10.11 France v Albania
07.10.11 Romania v Belarus
11.10.11 Albania v Romania
11.10.11 France v Bosnia-Herzegovina

Group E

Finland
Holland
Hungary
Moldova
San Marino
Sweden

03.09.10 Moldova v Finland
03.09.10 San Marino v Holland
03.09.10 Sweden v Hungary
07.09.10 Holland v Finland
07.09.10 Hungary v Moldova
07.09.10 Sweden v San Marino
08.10.10 Hungary v San Marino
08.10.10 Moldova v Holland
12.10.10 Finland v Hungary
12.10.10 Holland v Sweden
12.10.10 San Marino v Moldova
17.11.10 Finland v San Marino
25.03.11 Hungary v Holland
29.03.11 Holland v Hungary
29.03.11 Sweden v Moldova
03.06.11 Moldova v Sweden
03.06.11 San Marino v Finland
07.06.11 San Marino v Hungary
07.06.11 Sweden v Finland
02.09.11 Finland v Moldova
02.09.11 Holland v San Marino
02.09.11 Hungary v Sweden
06.09.11 Finland v Holland
06.09.11 Moldova v Hungary
06.09.11 San Marino v Sweden
07.10.11 Finland v Sweden
07.10.11 Holland v Moldova
11.10.11 Hungary v Finland
11.10.11 Moldova v San Marino
11.10.11 Sweden v Holland

Group F

Croatia
Georgia
Greece
Israel
Latvia
Malta

02.09.10 Israel v Malta
03.09.10 Greece v Georgia
03.09.10 Latvia v Croatia
07.09.10 Croatia v Greece
07.09.10 Georgia v Israel
07.09.10 Malta v Latvia
08.10.10 Georgia v Malta
08.10.10 Greece v Latvia
09.10.10 Israel v Croatia
12.10.10 Greece v Israel
12.10.10 Latvia v Georgia
17.11.10 Croatia v Malta
26.03.11 Georgia v Croatia
26.03.11 Israel v Latvia
26.03.11 Malta v Greece
29.03.11 Israel v Georgia
04.06.11 Croatia v Georgia
04.06.11 Greece v Malta
04.06.11 Latvia v Israel
02.09.11 Georgia v Latvia
02.09.11 Israel v Greece
02.09.11 Malta v Croatia
06.09.11 Croatia v Israel
06.09.11 Latvia v Greece
06.09.11 Malta v Georgia
07.10.11 Greece v Croatia
07.10.11 Latvia v Malta
11.10.11 Croatia v Latvia
11.10.11 Georgia v Greece
11.10.11 Malta v Israel

Group G

Bulgaria
England
Montenegro
Switzerland
Wales

03.09.10 England v Bulgaria
03.09.10 Montenegro v Wales
07.09.10 Bulgaria v Montenegro
07.09.10 Switzerland v England
08.10.10 Montenegro v Switzerland
08.10.10 Wales v Bulgaria
12.10.10 England v Montenegro
12.10.10 Switzerland v Wales
26.03.11 Bulgaria v Switzerland
26.03.11 Wales v England
04.06.11 England v Switzerland
04.06.11 Montenegro v Bulgaria
02.09.11 Bulgaria v England
02.09.11 Wales v Montenegro
06.09.11 England v Wales
06.09.11 Switzerland v Bulgaria
07.10.11 Montenegro v England
07.10.11 Wales v Switzerland
11.10.11 Bulgaria v Wales
11.10.11 Switzerland v Montenegro

Group H

Cyprus
Denmark
Iceland
Norway
Portugal

03.09.10 Iceland v Norway
03.09.10 Portugal v Cyprus
07.09.10 Denmark v Iceland
07.09.10 Norway v Portugal
08.10.10 Cyprus v Norway
08.10.10 Portugal v Denmark
12.10.10 Denmark v Cyprus
12.10.10 Iceland v Portugal
26.03.11 Cyprus v Iceland
26.03.11 Norway v Denmark
04.06.11 Iceland v Denmark
04.06.11 Portugal v Norway
02.09.11 Cyprus v Portugal
02.09.11 Norway v Iceland
06.09.11 Denmark v Norway
06.09.11 Iceland v Cyprus
07.10.11 Cyprus v Denmark
07.10.11 Portugal v Iceland
11.10.11 Denmark v Portugal
11.10.11 Norway v Cyprus

Group I

Czech Republic
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Scotland
Spain

03.09.10 Liechtenstein v Spain
03.09.10 Lithuania v Scotland
07.09.10 Czech Republic v Lithuania
07.09.10 Scotland v Liechtenstein
08.10.10 Czech Republic v Scotland
08.10.10 Spain v Lithuania
12.10.10 Liechtenstein v Czech Republic
12.10.10 Scotland v Spain
25.03.11 Spain v Czech Republic
29.03.11 Czech Republic v Liechtenstein
29.03.11 Lithuania v Spain
03.06.11 Liechtenstein v Lithuania
02.09.11 Lithuania v Liechtenstein
03.09.11 Scotland v Czech Republic
06.09.11 Scotland v Lithuania
06.09.11 Spain v Liechtenstein
07.10.11 Czech Republic v Spain
08.10.11 Liechtenstein v Scotland
11.10.11 Lithuania v Czech Republic
11.10.11 Spain v Scotland

The nine group winners and the runner-up with the best record (against the teams finishing 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th in the respective groups) qualify automatically for the finals. The eight remaining runners-up will be drawn in four head-to-head, two-leg play-offs, the winners of which will also qualify for the finals. Co-hosts Poland and Ukraine qualify automatically

Play-off dates:
1st legs - November 11/12, 2011;
2nd legs - November 15, 2011

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Return...Ibrahimovic

SWEDEN

Ibra back on target

Zlatan Ibrahimovic marked his return to the international stage following his brief "retirement" by scoring in a 3-0 win against Scotland.

SWITZERLAND

Costanzo's quick start

Young Boys striker Moreno Costanzo scored within 90 seconds of appearing as a sub and making his debut in the 1-0 win over Austria. The 22-year-old was one of a clutch of debutants fielded by coach Ottmar Hitzfeld.

TUNISIA

Eagles have lift off

Goals from Khaled Korbi, Issam Jemaa and Fahid Ben Khalfallah eased the pressure on coach Bertrand Marchand as a 3-1 win over Chad gave the Carthage Eagles their first points of their African Nations Cup qualifying campaign.

URUGUAY

Debut success

Palermo striker Abel Hernandez scored on his debut as *La Celeste* beat Angola 2-0. He also won the penalty from which Edinson Cavani opened the scoring.

Excellent start...Hernandez

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS

Draw & match schedule

Group A

Cape Verde Islands
Liberia
Mali
Zimbabwe

04.09.10	Cape Verde v Mali
04.09.10	Liberia v Zimbabwe
09.10.10	Mali v Liberia
09.10.10	Zimbabwe v Cape Verde
26.03.11	Cape Verde v Liberia
26.03.11	Mali v Zimbabwe
04.06.11	Liberia v Cape Verde
04.06.11	Zimbabwe v Mali
03.09.11	Mali v Cape Verde
03.09.11	Zimbabwe v Liberia
08.10.11	Cape Verde v Zimbabwe
08.10.11	Liberia v Mali

Group B

Ethiopia
Guinea
Madagascar
Nigeria

04.09.10	Ethiopia v Guinea
04.09.10	Nigeria v Madagascar
09.10.10	Guinea v Nigeria
09.10.10	Madagascar v Ethiopia
26.03.11	Madagascar v Guinea
26.03.11	Nigeria v Ethiopia
04.06.11	Ethiopia v Nigeria
04.06.11	Guinea v Madagascar
03.09.11	Guinea v Ethiopia
03.09.11	Madagascar v Nigeria
08.10.11	Ethiopia v Madagascar
08.10.11	Nigeria v Guinea

Group C

Comoros Islands
Libya
Mozambique
Zambia

04.09.10	Mozambique v Libya
04.09.10	Zambia v Comoros
09.10.10	Comoros v Mozambique
09.10.10	Libya v Zambia
26.03.11	Libya v Comoros
26.03.11	Mozambique v Zambia
04.06.11	Comoros v Libya
04.06.11	Zambia v Mozambique
03.09.11	Comoros v Zambia
03.09.11	Libya v Mozambique
08.10.11	Mozambique v Comoros
08.10.11	Zambia v Libya

Group D

Algeria
Central African Republic
Morocco
Tanzania

04.09.10	Algeria v Tanzania
04.09.10	Morocco v Central African Rep
09.10.10	Central African Rep v Algeria
09.10.10	Tanzania v Morocco
26.03.11	Algeria v Morocco
26.03.11	Tanzania v Central African Rep
04.06.11	Central African Rep v Tanzania
04.06.11	Morocco v Algeria
03.09.11	Central African Rep v Morocco
03.09.11	Tanzania v Algeria
08.10.11	Algeria v Central African Rep
08.10.11	Morocco v Tanzania

Group E

Cameroon
Democratic Republic of Congo
Mauritius
Senegal

04.09.10	DR Congo v Senegal
04.09.10	Mauritius v Cameroon
09.10.10	Cameroon v DR Congo
09.10.10	Senegal v Mauritius
26.03.11	DR Congo v Mauritius
26.03.11	Senegal v Cameroon
04.06.11	Cameroon v Senegal
04.06.11	Mauritius v DR Congo
03.09.11	Cameroon v Mauritius
03.09.11	Senegal v DR Congo
08.10.11	DR Congo v Cameroon
08.10.11	Mauritius v Senegal

Group F

Burkina Faso
Gambia
Mauritania
Namibia

04.09.10	Gambia v Namibia
04.09.10	Mauritania v Burkina Faso
09.10.10	Burkina Faso v Gambia
09.10.10	Namibia v Mauritania
26.03.11	Burkina Faso v Namibia
26.03.11	Mauritania v Gambia
04.06.11	Gambia v Mauritania
04.06.11	Namibia v Burkina Faso
03.09.11	Burkina Faso v Mauritania
03.09.11	Namibia v Gambia
08.10.11	Gambia v Burkina Faso
08.10.11	Mauritania v Namibia

Group G

Egypt
Niger
Sierra Leone
South Africa

03.09.10	Egypt v Sierra Leone
04.09.10	South Africa v Niger
09.10.10	Niger v Egypt
09.10.10	Sierra Leone v South Africa
26.03.11	Niger v Sierra Leone
26.03.11	South Africa v Egypt
04.06.11	Egypt v South Africa
04.06.11	Sierra Leone v Niger
03.09.11	Niger v South Africa
03.09.11	Sierra Leone v Egypt
08.10.11	Egypt v Niger
08.10.11	South Africa v Sierra Leone

Group H

Benin
Burundi
Ivory Coast
Rwanda

04.09.10	Benin v Burundi
04.09.10	Ivory Coast v Rwanda
09.10.10	Burundi v Ivory Coast
09.10.10	Rwanda v Benin
26.03.11	Ivory Coast v Benin
26.03.11	Rwanda v Burundi
04.06.11	Benin v Ivory Coast
04.06.11	Burundi v Rwanda
03.09.11	Burundi v Benin
03.09.11	Rwanda v Ivory Coast
08.10.11	Benin v Rwanda
08.10.11	Ivory Coast v Burundi

Group I

Congo
Ghana
Sudan
Swaziland

04.09.10	Sudan v Congo
04.09.10	Swaziland v Ghana
09.10.10	Congo v Swaziland
09.10.10	Ghana v Sudan
26.03.11	Congo v Ghana
26.03.11	Sudan v Swaziland
04.06.11	Ghana v Congo
04.06.11	Swaziland v Sudan
03.09.11	Congo v Sudan
03.09.11	Ghana v Swaziland
08.10.11	Sudan v Ghana
08.10.11	Swaziland v Congo

Group J

Angola
Guinea-Bissau
Kenya
Uganda

04.09.10	Guinea-Bissau v Kenya
04.09.10	Uganda v Angola
09.10.10	Angola v Guinea-Bissau
09.10.10	Kenya v Uganda
26.03.11	Guinea-Bissau v Uganda
26.03.11	Kenya v Angola
04.06.11	Angola v Kenya
04.06.11	Uganda v Guinea-Bissau
03.09.11	Angola v Uganda
03.09.11	Kenya v Guinea-Bissau
08.10.11	Guinea-Bissau v Angola
08.10.11	Uganda v Kenya

Group K

Botswana
Chad
Malawi
Togo
Tunisia

01.07.10	Chad v Togo	2-2
01.07.10	Tunisia v Botswana	0-1
09.07.10	Botswana v Chad	1-0
09.07.10	Togo v Malawi	1-1
11.08.10	Chad v Tunisia	1-3
11.08.10	Malawi v Botswana	1-1
04.09.10	Botswana v Togo	
04.09.10	Tunisia v Malawi	
09.10.10	Malawi v Chad	
09.10.10	Togo v Tunisia	
17.11.10	Botswana v Tunisia	
17.11.10	Togo v Chad	
26.03.11	Chad v Botswana	
26.03.11	Malawi v Togo	
04.06.11	Botswana v Malawi	
04.06.11	Tunisia v Chad	
03.09.11	Malawi v Tunisia	
03.09.11	Togo v Botswana	
08.10.11	Chad v Malawi	
08.10.11	Tunisia v Togo	

The 11 group winners and the three runners-up with the best record will qualify for the finals, to which co-hosts Equatorial Guinea and Gabon qualify automatically

FRIENDLIES – FIXTURES

Games announced so far – to end of year

Sep 3	China v Iran (Zhengzhou)
	Kuwait v Syria
	Panama v Costa Rica (Panama City)
	Qatar v Bahrain (Doha)
	Switzerland v Australia (St Gallen)
Sep 4	Canada v Peru (Toronto)
	El Salvador v Honduras (Los Angeles)
	Guatemala v Nicaragua (Fort Lauderdale)
	Japan v Paraguay (Yokohama)
	Mexico v Ecuador (Guadalajara)
	Poland v Ukraine (Lodz)
	Thailand v India (Bangkok)
Sep 5	Jamaica v Costa Rica (Kingston)
Sep 7	Argentina v Spain (Buenos Aires)
	Canada v Honduras (Montreal)
	China v Paraguay (Nanjing)
	Estonia v Uzbekistan (Tallinn)
	Japan v Guatemala (Osaka)
	Panama v Trinidad & Tobago (Panama City)
	Peru v Jamaica (Miami, USA)
	Poland v Australia (Krakow)
	Qatar v Oman (Doha)
	South Korea v Iran (Seoul)
	UAE v Kuwait
	Ukraine v Chile (Kiev)
Sep 8	India v Thailand (New Delhi)
	Madagascar v Gabon
	Mexico v Colombia
	Zimbabwe v Ghana (Harare)
Sep 10	Belize v Trinidad & Tobago (Belize City)
Sep 14	India v North Korea (New Delhi)
Sep 16	Thailand v Syria
Sep 19	Antigua & B v Trinidad & T (St John's)
Sep 29	New Caledonia v Tahiti
Oct 4	China v Syria
Oct 8	China v Syria
	Ukraine v Canada (Lviv)
Oct 9	Australia v Paraguay (Sydney)
	New Zealand v Honduras (Auckland)
	United States v Poland
Oct 10	Ecuador v Colombia (New York)
	Jamaica v Trinidad & Tobago (Kingston)
Oct 12	Mexico v Poland
	New Zealand v Paraguay (Wellington)
	Oman v Chile (Muscat)
	Qatar v Iraq (Doha)
	South Korea v Japan (Seoul)
	Ukraine v Uruguay
Oct 22	Egypt v Kuwait
Nov 17	Austria v Greece
	Chile v Uruguay (Santiago)
	China v Latvia (Beijing)
	England v France (London)
	Holland v Turkey (Amsterdam)
	Jordan v Cyprus (Amman)
	Malta v Azerbaijan
	Poland v Russia
	Portugal v Spain
	Republic of Ireland v Norway (Dublin)
	Sweden v Germany (Gothenburg)
	Switzerland v Ukraine (Geneva)
Dec 17	Iraq v Syria
Dec 22	Syria v Iraq
Dec 29	Jordan v China (Dubai)

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SOUTH AMERICA Libertadores Cup

Inter take Cup back to Brazil

Brazilian joy...D'Alessandro holds aloft the Libertadores Cup

WITH home and away wins over Guadalajara of Mexico, Internacional became the first Brazilian side to win the Libertadores since 2006 – the year in which the club from Porto Alegre picked up the title for the first time.

That four-year gap shows that the Brazilian stranglehold on South America's premier club competition has been incomplete in one vital detail. Since the expansion of the tournament in 2000, Brazil has supplied half the finalists: 11 in 11 years, drawn from nine different clubs. Meanwhile, only two Argentinian clubs have reached the Final. But Argentina boast five wins, while, until this year, Brazil had only two. Moreover, those two triumphs both came in all-Brazilian Finals.

The last time a Brazilian club overcame foreign opposition to lift the trophy was way back in 1999, as time and time again Brazilian sides have blown up in the Final. And there was one brief moment in the second leg of this year's Final when it looked as though it might happen again.

In the first leg in Guadalajara, Internacional surprised perhaps even themselves with the extent to which they dominated the game. On a synthetic pitch in the newly inaugurated Estadio Omnilife, the Brazilians controlled possession, hit the woodwork twice and were unfortunate to go behind just before the interval, Adolfo Bautista stealing in to score with a clever looping header.

It was the first clear opportunity Chivas had created in the match – and there would not be another. Internacional even shrugged off an injury picked up by centre-forward Alecsandro to strike back as former international left-back Kleber, excellent in both legs, crossed for Giuliano to head home the equaliser. And power in the air paid off for a second time when the centre-backs combined, Indio nodding the ball across the face of goal and captain Bolivar's stooping header to ensure Inter's first away win of the campaign.

A draw in the return match in Porto Alegre would have been good enough for Inter – which, given the club could boast a 100 per cent home record in this year's tournament, seemed like a foregone conclusion.

The Mexicans, though, looked more comfortable away from home. Once more they took the lead shortly before half time, and again

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All too familiar...tempers flare after the final whistle in the Final

it was a well-taken goal, Omar Bravo winning a header and the talented Marco Fabian hooking his shot in on the turn. This time, though, the goal was not completely against the run of play. Chivas were having more success bringing their dangerous strikers into the game. Brazilian nerves were jangling and Alecsandro was being missed. In a 4-2-3-1 system the centre-forward has a crucial and often difficult role; brought in as his replacement, Rafael Sobis – who scored twice in the 2006 Final – did not look physically sharp enough to carry it out. Might the Libertadores title slip through Brazilian fingers once more?

The answer came just after the hour mark. Midfielder Tinga spread the play, Kleber curled a wonderful low cross behind the defence for the arriving Sobis to beat the keeper from close range. His work done, the exhausted striker made way for powerful young substitute Leandro Damiao, who soon made his presence felt, latching on to a misplaced Mexican pass and racing away from the halfway line to score a memorable second.

There have been more convincing winners ...Inter's progress through the knockout rounds was always on the away-goals rule

There was no way back for Chivas. A frustrated and over-worked Omar Arellano was sent off for sliding through Inter's Argentinian playmaker Andres D'Alessandro, while another Brazilian substitute, Giuliano, continued his remarkable scoring run with a gorgeous solo goal in the last minute. With the last kick of the game Bravo pulled one back after Bautista's free-kick came back off the bar, but it was mere consolation. The title was heading for Brazil.

On the final whistle the niggle present throughout the game exploded into a fight between the two teams, an all too frequent and unwelcome part of Libertadores tradition. It soured Internacional's moment, but not for long as Pele handed over the trophy that conformed them as the new kings of South America.

There have, perhaps, been more convincing winners. With the exception of the Final, Inter's progress through the knockout rounds was always on the away-goals rule and only two champions since 2000 have managed less than their total of 20 goals.

But there was much to admire in their play, especially in midfield where Sandro – who moved to Tottenham Hotspur in the Premier League after the Final – was strong and mobile in the holding role. Two Argentinians also

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shone: Pablo Guinazu as the heartbeat and D'Alessandro dictating the rhythm. Meanwhile, Giuliano was an outstanding supersub.

Overcoming Estudiantes, Sao Paulo and Guadalajara means that Inter saw off the best that Argentina, Brazil and Mexico could throw at them. Taking over from the sacked Uruguayan coach Jorge Fossati, the much maligned Celso Roth saw them through the semi-final and Final, and Internacional will be confident of adding the Club World Cup crown in December.

In the semi-finals, Guadalajara had found it hard going against Universidad de Chile, the club with the best away record in this year's tournament.

The first Chilean semi-finalists since 1997, *La U* carried a threat on the counter-attack and from set-pieces, and centre-back Rafael Olarra headed them into the lead, only for Arellano to lash home an equaliser after Bravo's header was saved. However, back at full strength with the return of their international stars who had missed the previous rounds preparing for South Africa, Guadalajara's strike force found things much easier in the return leg.

Home keeper Miguel Pinto kept them at bay with a string of fine saves, but then let a Xavier Baez shot squirm through him. With both sides fighting for the right to appear in their first Final, defender Jonny Magallon made sure the honour went to the Mexicans when he forced home the clinching goal.

In the other tie, Sao Paulo were unable to reproduce their form of the earlier stages. Superb when beating compatriots Cruzeiro in the quarter-finals in May, they could find nothing like the same momentum after the two-month break and hardly crossed the halfway line in losing 1-0 away to Internacional, Giuliano once again coming off the bench to score.

In addition to changing their coach, Inter had used the World Cup break to re-enforce their squad, bringing back three old favourites: Tinga from Borussia Dortmund, Sobis from Al Jazira of the UAE and keeper Renan on loan from Valencia. However, an extraordinary blunder from Renan gifted Sao Paulo the lead in the second leg, as he allowed a routine cross to bounce behind him off his chest for Alex Silva to head home. Alecsandro came up with the vital strike for the visitors, applying a clever flick to D'Alessandro's free-kick, but Sao Paulo levelled the aggregate scores through ex-international striker Ricardo Oliveira.

With 15 minutes left, the experienced Tinga committed a needless foul, picked up his second yellow card and was sent off. The tension cranked up still further, but the 10 men held out for their third consecutive away-goals victory and prepared for the Final in the knowledge that, win or lose, they had already booked their place in the Club World Cup – as outsiders from the CONCACAF region, Guadalajara would not have been able to represent South America in Abu Dhabi whatever the outcome.

Tim Vickery

Internacional will be confident of adding the Club World Cup crown when they travel to Abu Dhabi in December

On target...Rafael Sobis (far right) scores in the second leg of the Final

Too late...Universidad de Chile goalkeeper Miguel Pinto fails to stop a shot from Guadalajara's Xavier Baez (not in picture) as Omar Bravo looks on

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PEOPLE in the news

Balotelli and Milner added to City spending spree

Big investment...Balotelli joined the Man City revolution

EUROPE

Manchester City took their summer spending spree to over £125million with the purchase of MARIO BALOTELLI from Internazionale and JAMES MILNER from Aston Villa. City recouped a little bit of their money by offloading midfielder STEPHEN IRELAND to Villa.

Werder Bremen signed 23-year-old Brazilian midfielder WESLEY from Santos as a replacement for Germany's World Cup star MESUT OZIL, who joined Real Madrid.

Chelsea signed Brazil midfielder RAMIRES from Benfica for a fee of around £16.3million. The 23-year-old signed a four-year contract.

FABIO CAPELLO effectively brought the curtain down on DAVID BECKHAM's England career by admitting the 35-year-old is too old for the Euro 2012 qualifiers. Beckham, who missed the World Cup through injury, still wants to play for his country, but Capello has revealed the LA Galaxy midfielder is surplus to requirements. Beckham has won 115 caps.

French champions Marseille signed striker LOIC REMY from Nice for £12.5million. "The good thing is he can play every position in the front line," said OM boss DIDIER DESCHAMPS of the 23-year-old, who has been capped twice by France.

Olympiakos parted company with coach EWALD LIENEN after only two games in charge – one of which he won – after they were knocked out of the Europa League by Maccabi Tel Aviv on away goals. He was replaced by former Villarreal boss ERNESTO VALVERDE.

Having failed to land him when in charge of Internazionale, JOSE MOURINHO signed 32-year-old Portugal centre-back RICARDO CARVALHO for Real Madrid for £8million from Chelsea.

As well as managing him in England, Mourinho was also the defender's boss at Porto.

Former Holland midfielder EDGAR DAVIDS came out of retirement to join English second-tier side Crystal Palace.

The 37-year-old, who can count Milan, Internazionale, Juventus and Tottenham Hotspur among his former clubs, last played a competitive match two years ago for Ajax.

"I just want to enjoy football and show what I can do," said Davids.

MARTIN O'NEILL quit as manager of Aston Villa five days before the start of the Premier League season. Reserve-team boss KEVIN MACDONALD took over as caretaker boss.

Republic of Ireland winger AIDEN MCGEADY joined Spartak Moscow from Celtic in a deal believed to be around £9.5million.

Portugal coach CARLOS QUEIROZ will miss his side's opening Euro 2012 qualifiers, against Cyprus and Norway in September, after being suspended by the Portuguese Football Federation for acting aggressively towards doping testers.

Arsenal completed the signing of France defender SEBASTIEN SQUILLACI from Sevilla.

Playing at Palace...Davids returned to football in the English second tier

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Holland defender ANDRE OOIJER returned to Ajax after leaving Dutch rivals PSV as a free agent. The 36-year-old, who left the Amsterdam club at the age of 20, said: "Of course I am happy. This is where I started and came through the youth system."

As Italy rebuild after their disastrous summer in South Africa, 1994 World Cup winner ROBERTO BAGGIO was appointed head of the Italian FA's technical sector.

ARRIGO SACCHI, who was Baggio's coach at the finals in the USA, was named youth teams co-ordinator, with GIANNI RIVERA – the first Italian to be named European player of the year – in charge of teaching and youth sector.

Technical boss...Baggio

France defender WILLIAM GALLAS joined Tottenham Hotspur on a free transfer after being released during the summer by their arch-rivals Arsenal.

After nearly six years in the job, GUY HELLERS stood down as coach of Luxembourg. The 45-year-old former midfielder, who was capped 55 times by Luxembourg, replaced ALLAN SIMONSEN in December 2004. Under-21 boss LUC HOLTZ has taken over as caretaker coach.

World Cup semi-finalist DIEGO GODIN has joined Uruguay team-mate DIEGO FORLAN at Atletico Madrid, following the defender's £6.6million move from Villarreal.

Unirea Urziceni coach RONNY LEVY quit his position with the Romanian club due to what he called "financial reasons".

The only Croatian to win 100 caps, Dinamo Zagreb's DARIO SIMIC retired at the age of 34. The former Internazionale, Milan and Monaco defender has enrolled in Croatia's coaching academy.

Stoke City broke their transfer record with the £8million signing of Trinidad & Tobago striker KENWYNE JONES from Sunderland.

Five weeks after joining Guimaeres from Portuguese third-tier side Estrela da Amadora, 20-year-old striker BEBE was signed by Manchester United for a fee reported to be around £7.4million.

Spartak Moscow signed twin brothers DMITRI and KIRILL KOMBAROV from Dynamo Moscow for an undisclosed fee. In a joint statement the brothers said: "This was a very difficult decision for us. However, Spartak made us a very serious offer."

Former Italy right-back CHRISTIAN PANUCCI retired at the age of 37. During his career he made 57 international appearances and won the Champions League with Milan and Real Madrid.

Belgium striker MOUSSA DEMBELE joined Fulham from Dutch outfit AZ for a fee believed to be £5million.

Star striker...Bobek scored more goals for Yugoslavia than any other player

One day after signing for Genoa from English second-tier side Portsmouth, Ghana midfielder KEVIN-PRINCE BOATENG joined Milan on a season-long loan with a view to a permanent move.

Liverpool midfielder ALBERTO AQUILANI returned to Italy on a season-long loan to Juventus. The Serie A outfit say they have an option to buy the player who moved to England in a £17million transfer from Roma last summer.

STJEPAN BOBEK, who played in the 1950 and 1954 World Cups for Yugoslavia, passed away at the age of 86.

The Partizan Belgrade forward also won two Olympic silver medals for his country, in London 1948 and Helsinki 1952.

Bobek, a Croat who was born in Zagreb, was the all-time top scorer for the Yugoslav national team, scoring 38 goals in 63 appearances between 1946 and 1956. In total, he played 478 games for Partizan and scored 425 goals. He played 13 years with Partizan and won two league titles and four cups.

As a coach he won three league titles with Partizan in the 1960s and later worked – albeit with less success – in Poland with Legia Warsaw, Greece with both Panathinaikos and Olympiakos, Esperance of Tunisia and Macedonian side Vardar.

In 1995, when Partizan celebrated their 50th anniversary, he was named the club's best player of all time.

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PEOPLE in the news

Fiorentina midfielder STEVAN JOVETIC is expected to miss up to seven months of the season after damaging ligaments in his right knee following a clash with team-mate MARIO BOLATTI in training.

HENRYK KASPERCZAK, who returned to coach Wisla Krakow in March despite taking the club to court over an overdue payment from a previous spell in charge, quit when they were eliminated from the Europa League by Qarabag. He was replaced by ROBERT MAASKANT, formerly of NAC Breda.

Jon Dahl Tomasson announced his retirement from international football at the age of 33. The Denmark striker won his 112th and final cap in his country's defeat to Japan at the World Cup. He scored a late penalty in that 3-1 defeat to become Denmark's joint record goalscorer with 52 goals.

Lazio signed Brazilian midfielder HERNANES from Sao Paulo on a five-year contract.

SANDOR CSANYI was elected president of the Hungarian FA.

SOUTH AMERICA

Portugal's Brazil-born midfielder DECO returned home to join Fluminense on a free transfer after being released by Chelsea.

REINALDO RUEDA quit as coach of Honduras to take charge of Ecuador. The Colombian, who guided Honduras to only their second World Cup finals this summer, replaced SIXTO VIZUETE.

EMILIO IZAGUIRRE, who played for Honduras in the World Cup, joined Scottish club Celtic from Motagua in his homeland.

MARCELO BIELSA, who guided Chile to the second round of the World Cup in South Africa, has agreed a new contract to coach *La Roja* until the 2015 Copa America. In addition to coaching the national team, he will also have an input into the Under-20 side and the federation as a whole.

Carrying on...Bielsa agreed to coach Chile for another five years

Chile midfielder JORGE VALDIVIA rejoined Palmeiras of Brazil from United Arab Emirates side Al Ain.

CONCACAF

Marquez moves to New York

Mexico captain and two-time UEFA Champions League winner RAFAEL MARQUEZ has joined his former Barcelona team-mate THIERRY HENRY at New York in MLS.

The 31-year-old defender, who has 94 caps for his country, said: "Despite having the opportunity to fulfil my contract with Barcelona, coming to New York and playing in Major League Soccer was a chance that I could not refuse.

"I'm completely committed to doing my very best to help the Red Bulls in the play-off push this year and compete for championships in the years to come."

New start...Marquez

Former Barcelona, Benfica, Manchester City and Hull City midfielder GEOVANNI joined MLS side San Jose Earthquakes. The 30-year-old Brazilian is the club's first-ever "designated player".

Club focus...Appiah called time on his international career

AFRICA

Cameroon appointed former Spain boss JAVIER CLEMENTE as their new coach. The 60-year-old, who was in charge of his national side between 1992 and 1998, replaced PAUL LE GUEN, who parted company with the Indomitable Lions after they lost all three of their games in South Africa this summer.

He will be assisted by FRANCOIS OMAM-BIYIK, who played in three World Cup finals.

FRANCIS ZAHOUI, who was previously in charge of the country's junior side, is the new Ivory Coast national coach.

Denmark's JAN POULSEN replaced MARCIO MAXIMO as coach of Tanzania.

Egypt striker MIDO rejoined Ajax, where he spent a two-year spell earlier in his career. The 27-year-old was released by Middlesbrough during the summer.

Ghana's World Cup captain STEPHEN APPIAH joined Serie A newcomers Cesena on a one-year deal. The 29-year-old midfielder, who spent last season at Bologna but played only two games, also announced his retirement from international football.

ASIA

HOLGER OSIECK, who was assistant to FRANZ BECKENBAUER when West Germany won the 1990 World Cup, has replaced PIM VERBEEK as coach of Australia. He led Canada to victory in the 2000 Gold Cup and has also coached Turkish club Fenerbahce. The German's most recent work was at Japanese club Urawa Red Diamonds, who he led to the Asian Champions League title in 2007.

KAZUYOSHI MIURA broke his own record as the J.League's oldest scorer after finding the net – at 43 years, five months and 12 days – for Yokohama FC against Fagiano Okayama.

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AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2010

Experienced...Takahara has joined Suwon

KEY DATES

Quarter-finals	**September 15 and 22**
Semi-finals	**October 5/6 and 20**
Final	**November 13**

SOUTH KOREA'S position as the dominant nation in Asian football is likely to be underlined when the latest edition of the Asian Champions League reaches its climax in November.

All four clubs from the country's K-League set-up that entered the tournament back in February remain in contention at the last-eight stage as they seek to keep the trophy in Korea. This is the first time since the competition was restructured in 2002 that four clubs from one country have advanced so far and the success of the South Koreans is heightened further by the failure of any clubs from their great rivals Japan to reach the quarter-final stage.

They are guaranteed at least one semi-finalist with **Suwon Bluewings** – who have undergone a major overhaul during the summer – meeting compatriots **Seongnam Ilhwa** in the only all-Korean quarter-final.

Gone from the two-time Asian champions Suwon is former national coach Cha Bum-kun, who stepped down at the start of June as the K-League took its World Cup break, and in his place is Yoon Sung-hyo.

Yoon has overseen a restructuring of the squad, with former Japan striker Naohiro Takahara drafted in from Urawa Red Diamonds to lead the attacking line, and the coach hopes the ex-Hamburg forward will reclaim the form that made him one of the most feared strikers in Asian football earlier in his career.

"We did not get good results in the domestic league in 2001 and 2002 but managed to win the continental title by beating strong Asian rivals," says Yoon of the club's two previous triumphs. "I hope this to happen again this year.

"I want to show speedy and beautiful football. It's the attacking style of play to find spaces with quick passes and movement. I want to bring the players' creativity out on the field.

"The players lacked motivation before the World Cup break due to straight defeats. I did not have enough time to train the team but I want the players to understand my philosophy.

"It's very important to bring their confidence back and build as a team rather than include big names from other clubs."

In his youth, Takahara played a vital role in the Jubilo Iwata side that won the 1999 Asian Club Championship and reached the next two finals – losing in 2000 against Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia before slipping up against Suwon the following season.

Takahara is joined at the club by Brazilian midfielder Marcio Diogo.

Meanwhile, Song Chong-gug – a veteran of the 2002 World Cup finals with South Korea and formerly of Feyenoord – has left Suwon and become the latest Korean to head to the Middle East, joining Saudi Arabian side **Al Shabab**, who take on the K-League's **Chonbuk Motors**.

New boss...Fosatti

Song will link up with Uruguayan manager Jorge Fosatti – the ex-Qatar coach – who was appointed Al Shabab boss ahead of the new Saudi season.

"We have many goals including continuing in the Asian Champions League and being successful in the Saudi league," says Fosatti. "I hope that, with luck, we can achieve these goals and I can lead the team to the Final and win the Asian championship."

Al Shabab are joined in the last eight by compatriots **Al Hilal**, who face Qatar's **Al Gharafa** and are looking to overcome a poor recent record in the competition.

Previously one of the most feared clubs in Asia, Al Hilal have endured a barren spell in the Asian champions League era, having only reached the quarter-finals on one previous occasion, in 2009.

Coach Eric Gerets has already announced he intends to leave the club to take over Morocco's national team when Al Hilal's involvement in the Champions League is over, but the Belgian – who steered the Riyadh club to last season's league title – is confident his impending departure will have no negative bearing on his team's preparations for their quarter-final.

"I will go to Morocco some time but I have to keep my promise to Al Hilal," explains Gerets. "There are major tournaments coming up which I want to win. It is not a good time to leave Al Hilal before the mission is accomplished.

"We want success not only in the local tournaments but also the Asian Champions League to make all our fans happy."

Korea's fourth quarter-finalists are **Pohang Steelers**, who defeated Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad in last year's Final in Tokyo and who hope to overcome a poor run of form in their domestic league when they take on **Zob Ahan** of Iran.

Under the control of caretaker coach Park Chang-hyun, Pohang are attempting to become only the second side to successfully defend the title in the Champions League era.

Michael Church

For fixtures go to
www.worldsoccer/fixtures/afcchampionsleague

Morocco-bound...Gerets

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On top...Vossen

BELGIUM

Top two march on

Genk and Mechelen maintained their 100 per cent starts to the new league season with victories away to Eupen and Club Brugge respectively.

An Ibrahima Camara own goal set Genk on their way at bottom of the table Eupen before a Torben Joneleit double and Jelle Vossen put the visitors in complete control. The hosts, who had Olivier Vinamont sent-off three minutes before the break, grabbed a consolation through Marko Obradovic.

Meanwhile, Mechelen won 2-1 at Club Brugge with goals from Kenny Vanhoevelen and Julien Gorius after Jonathan Blondel had been sent off for Brugge. Ronald Vargas pulled one back for the 10 men who could not find an equaliser.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Early changes

Borac Banja Luka replaced coach Zoran Maric with Vlado Jagodic after they lost their first game of the season, 3-2 at home to Siroki Brijeg.

Slavija won their opening game, 1-0 at home to Sloboda Tuzla, but also parted company with their coach, Milan Gutovic.

Gone...Donchev

RESULTS

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

3rd qualifying round

1st legs - July 27/28; 2nd legs - August 3/4

AIK Stockholm (Swe) v Rosenborg (Nor)
0-1, 0-3 (agg 0-4)
Ajax (Hol) v PAOK Salonika (Gre)
1-1, 3-3 (agg 4-4; Ajax on away goals)
Aktobe (Kaz) v Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr)
1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3)
BATE Borisov (Bls) v Copenhagen (Den)
0-0, 2-3 (agg 2-3)
Debrecen (Hun) v Basle (Swi)
0-2, 1-3 (agg 1-5)
Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) v Gent (Blg)
3-0, 3-1 (agg 6-1)
Litex Lovech (Bul) v Zilina (Slk)
1-1, 1-3 (agg 2-4)
Omonia (Cyp) v Salzburg (Aut)
1-1, 1-4 (agg 2-5)
Partizan Belgrade (Ser) v HJK Helsinki (Fin)
3-0, 2-1 (agg 5-1)
Sheriff (Mol) v Dinamo Zagreb (Cro)
1-1, 1-1 (aet) (agg 2-2; Sheriff 6-5 on pens)
Sparta Prague (Cze) v Lech Poznan (Pol)
1-0, 1-0 (agg 2-0)
Sporting Braga (Por) v Celtic (Sco)
3-0, 1-2 (agg 4-2)
The New Saints (Wal) v Anderlecht (Blg)
1-3, 0-3 (agg 1-6)
Unirea Urziceni (Rom) v Zenit St Petersburg (Rus)
0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
Young Boys (Swi) v Fenerbahce (Tur)
2-2, 1-0 (agg 3-2)

Losing teams entered Europa League at 4th qualifying round stage

4th qualifying round

1st legs - August 17/18; 2nd legs - August 24/25

Basle v Sheriff
1-0, 3-0 (agg 4-0)
Dynamo Kyiv v Ajax
1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)
Partizan Belgrade v Anderlecht
2-2, 2-2 (aet) (agg 4-4; Partizan 3-2 on pens)
Rosenborg v Copenhagen
2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2; Copenhagen on away goals)
Salzburg v Hapoel Tel Aviv
2-3, 1-1 (agg 3-4)
Sparta Prague v Zilina
0-2, 0-1 (agg 0-3)
Sporting Braga v Sevilla (Spa)
1-0, 4-3 (agg 5-3)
Werder Bremen (Ger) v Sampdoria (Ita)
3-1, 2-3 (aet) (agg 5-4)
Young Boys v Tottenham (Eng)
3-2, 0-4 (agg 3-6)
Zenit St Petersburg v Auxerre (Fra)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)

Losing teams enter Europa League at group stage

Group stage draw

Group A
Internazionale (Ita)
Tottenham Hotspur (Eng)
Twente (Hol)
Werder Bremen (Ger)

Group B
Benfica (Por)
Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr)
Lyon (Fra)
Schalke (Ger)

Group C
Bursaspor (Tur)
Manchester United (Eng)
Rangers (Sco)
Valencia (Spa)

Group D
Barcelona (Spa)
Copenhagen (Den)
Panathinaikos (Gre)
Rubin Kazan (Rus)

Group E
Basle (Swi)
Bayern Munich (Ger)
CFR Cluj (Rom)
Roma (Ita)

Group F
Chelsea (Eng)
Marseille (Fra)
Spartak Moscow (Rus)
Zilina (Slk)

Group G
Ajax (Hol)
Auxerre (Fra)
Milan (Ita)
Real Madrid (Spa)

Group H
Arsenal (Eng)
Partizan Belgrade (Ser)
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr)
Sporting Braga (Por)

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout round; the third-placed teams enter Europa League at 1st knockout round stage

Matchdays:
September 14/15; September 28/29; October 19/20; November 2/3; November 23/24; December 7/8

EUROPA LEAGUE

3rd qualifying round

1st legs - July 27/29; 2nd legs - August 3/5

Aalesund (Nor) v Motherwell (Sco)
1-1, 0-3 (agg 1-4)
APOEL (Cyp) v Jablonec (Cze)
1-0, 3-1 (agg 4-1)
AZ Alkmaar (Hol) v IFK Gothenburg (Swe)
2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1)
Beroe (Bul) v Rapid Wien (Aut)
1-1, 0-3 (agg 1-4)
Buducnost Podgorica (Mne) v Brondby (Den)
1-2, 0-1 (agg 1-3)
Cercle Brugge (Blg) v Anorthosis (Cyp)
1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3)
CSKA Sofia (Bul) v Cliftonville (Nir)
3-0, 2-1 (agg 5-1)
Dinamo Bucharest (Rom) v Hajduk Split (Cro)
3-1, 0-3 (agg 3-4)
Dnepr Mogilev (Bls) v Banik Ostrava (Cze)
1-0, 2-1 (agg 3-1)
Elfsborg (Swe) v Teteks (Mac)
5-0, 2-1 (agg 7-1)
Galatasaray (Tur) v OFK Belgrade (Ser)
2-2, 5-1 (agg 7-3)
Gyor (Hun) v Montpellier (Fra)
0-1, 1-0 (aet) (agg 1-1; Gyor 4-3 on pens)
Inter Turku (Fin) v Genk (Blg)
1-5, 2-3 (agg 3-8)
Jagiellonia Bialystok (Pol) v Aris (Gre)
1-2, 2-2 (agg 3-4)
Kalmar (Swe) v Levski Sofia (Bul)
1-1, 2-5 (agg 3-6)
Karpaty Lviv (Ukr) v Zestaponi (Geo)
1-0, 1-0 (agg 2-0)
Maccabi Haifa (Isr) v Dinamo Minsk (Bls)
1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3)
Maribor (Sln) v Hibernian (Sco)
3-0, 3-2 (agg 6-2)
Maritimo (Por) v Bangor City (Wal)
8-2, 2-1 (agg 10-3)
Molde (Nor) v Stuttgart (Ger)
2-3, 2-2 (agg 4-5)
MyPa (Fin) v Timisoara (Rom)
1-2, 3-3 (agg 4-5)
Nordsjaelland (Den) v Sporting Lisbon (Por)
0-1, 1-2 (agg 1-3)
OB Odense (Den) v Zrinjski (Bos)
5-3, 0-0 (agg 5-3)
Olympiakos (Gre) v Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr)
2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2; Maccabi on away goals)
Plzen (Cze) v Besiktas (Tur)
1-1, 0-3 (agg 1-4)
Rabotnicki (Mac) v Liverpool (Eng)
0-2, 0-2 (agg 0-4)
Randers (Den) v Lausanne (Swi)
2-3, 1-1 (agg 3-4)
Red Star Belgrade (Ser) v Slovan Bratislava (Slk)
1-2, 1-1 (agg 2-3)
Ruch Chorzow (Pol) v Austria Wien (Aut)
1-3, 0-3 (agg 1-6)
Shamrock Rovers (Rlr) v Juventus (Ita)
0-2, 0-1 (agg 0-3)
Sibir Novosibirsk (Rus) v Apollon (Cyp)
1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2; Sibir on away goals)
Spartak Zlatibor Voda (Ser) v Dnipro (Ukr)
2-1, 0-2 (agg 2-3)
Sturm Graz (Aut) v Dinamo Tbilisi (Geo)
2-0, 1-1 (agg 3-1)
Utrecht (Hol) v Lucerne (Swi)
1-0, 3-1 (agg 4-1)
Wisla Krakow (Pol) v Qarabag (Aze)
0-1, 2-3 (agg 2-4)

4th qualifying round

(losing teams from the Champions League 3rd qualifying round entered at this stage)
1st legs - August 17/19; 2nd legs - August 24/26

AIK Solna (Swe) v Levski Sofia
0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2)
Aris v Austria Wien
1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1)
AZ Alkmaar v Aktobe (Kaz)
2-0, 1-2 (agg 3-2)
BATE Borisov (Bls) v Maritimo
3-0, 2-1 (agg 5-1)
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) v Tavriya (Ukr)
3-0, 3-1 (agg 6-1)
Besiktas v HJK Helsinki (Fin)
2-0, 4-0 (agg 6-0)
Borussia Dortmund (Ger) v Qarabag
4-0, 1-0 (agg 5-0)
Celtic (Sco) v Utrecht
2-0, 0-4 (agg 2-4)
Club Brugge (Blg) v Dinamo Minsk
2-1, 3-2 (agg 5-3)
CSKA Moscow (Rus) v Anorthosis
4-0, 2-1 (agg 6-1)
CSKA Sofia v The New Saints (Wal)
3-0, 2-2 (agg 5-2)
Debrecen (Hun) v Litex Lovech (Bul)
2-0, 2-1 (agg 4-1)
Dnipro v Lech Poznan (Pol)
0-1, 0-0 (agg 0-1)
Dundee United (Sco) v AEK Athens (Gre)
0-1, 1-1 (agg 1-2)
Feyenoord (Hol) v Gent (Blg)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
Galatasaray v Karpaty Lviv
2-2, 1-1 (agg 3-3; Karpaty Lviv on away goals)
Genk v Porto (Por)
0-3, 2-4 (agg 2-7)
Getafe (Spa) v APOEL
1-0, 1-1 (aet) (agg 2-1)
Gyor v Dinamo Zagreb (Cro)
0-2, 1-2 (agg 1-4)
Hajduk Split v Unirea Urziceni (Rom)
4-1, 1-1 (agg 5-2)
Lausanne v Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus)
1-1, 1-1 (aet) (agg 2-2; Lausanne 4-3 on pens)
Liverpool v Trabzonspor (Tur)
1-0, 2-1 (agg 3-1)
Napoli (Ita) v Elfsborg
1-0, 2-0 (agg 3-0)
OB Odense v Motherwell
2-1, 1-0 (agg 3-1)
Omonia (Cyp) v Metalist (Ukr)
0-1, 2-2 (agg 2-3)
Palermo (Ita) v Maribor
3-0, 2-3 (agg 5-3)
PAOK Salonika (Gre) v Fenerbahce (Tur)
1-0, 1-1 (aet) (agg 2-1)
Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) v Maccabi Tel Aviv
2-0, 3-4 (agg 5-4)
Rapid Wien v Aston Villa (Eng)
1-1, 3-2 (agg 4-3)
Sibir Novosibirsk v PSV Eindhoven (Hol)
1-0, 0-5 (agg 1-5)
Slovan Bratislava v Stuttgart
0-1, 2-2 (agg 2-3)
Sporting Lisbon v Brondby
0-2, 3-0 (agg 3-2)
Steaua Bucharest (Rom) v Grasshopper (Swi)
1-0, 0-1 (aet) (agg 1-1; Steaua 4-3 on pens)
Sturm Graz v Juventus
1-2, 0-1 (agg 1-3)
Timisoara v Manchester City (Eng)
0-1, 0-2 (agg 0-3)
Vaslui (Rom) v Lille (Fra)
0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2)

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BULGARIA

CSKA's poor run

Pavel Dochev resigned as CSKA Sofia coach after picking up just one point from their first three league games. They lost 1-0 to city rivals Levski and 2-1 to Chernomorets Burgas before drawing 2-2 at promoted Vidima-Rakovski Sevlievo. Gjore Jovanovski, who is a former national coach of Macedonia, replaced him.

Dinamo boss...Halilhodzic

CROATIA

Halilhodzic at Dinamo

Following Dinamo Zagreb's worst start to a season for 20 years, Vahid Halilhodzic replaced Velimir Zajec as head coach.

The former Ivory Coast boss has signed a two-and-a-half year deal to take charge of the Croatian champions and said: "I am surprised with these developments and I am very happy to become Dinamo's coach. I come here with a great desire and great ambitions to lead Dinamo into the Champions League.

"I am convinced Dinamo can be successful and this is my project."

Dinamo bowed out of this season's Champions League to Sheriff of Moldova in the third qualifying round and are fourth in the league after their first five games.

CYPRUS

Super Cup success

League champions Omonia beat Apollon 3-2 on penalties to win the Cypriot Super Cup.

Jose Semedo opened the scoring but Omonia drew level through Leandro. The game went to a shoot-out, where misses from Semedo and Apollon team-mates Nasief Morris and Felix Ogbuke handed the trophy to Omonia.

Villarreal* (Spa) v Dnepr Mogilev
5-0, 2-1 (agg 7-1)

**Villarreal took the place of Mallorca, who did not have the requisite licence to compete*

Group stage draw

(losing teams from the Champions League 4th qualifying round enter at this stage; Europa League holders Atletico Madrid were given direct entry to the group stage)

Group A
Juventus (Ita)
Lech Poznan (Pol)
Manchester City (Eng)
Salzburg (Aut)

Group B
Aris (Gre)
Atletico Madrid (Spa)
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)
Rosenborg (Nor)

Group C
Gent (Blg)
Levski Sofia (Bul)
Lille (Fra)
Sporting Lisbon (Por)

Group D
Club Brugge (Blg)
Dinamo Zagreb (Cro)
PAOK Salonika (Gre)
Villarreal (Spa)

Group E
AZ Alkmaar (Hol)
BATE Borisov (Bls)
Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr)
Sheriff (Mol)

Group F
CSKA Moscow (Rus)
Lausanne (Swi)
Palermo (Ita)
Sparta Prague (Cze)

Group G
AEK Athens (Gre)
Anderlecht (Blg)
Hajduk Split (Cro)
Zenit St Petersburg (Rus)

Group H
Getafe (Spa)
OB Odense (Den)
Stuttgart (Ger)
Young Boys (Swi)

Group I
Debrecen (Hun)
Metalist (Ukr)
PSV Eindhoven (Hol)
Sampdoria (Ita)

Group J
Borussia Dortmund (Ger)
Karpaty Lviv (Ukr)
Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)
Sevilla (Spa)

Group K
Liverpool (Eng)
Napoli (Ita)
Steaua Bucharest (Rom)
Utrecht (Hol)

Group L
Besiktas (Tur)
CSKA Sofia (Bul)
Porto (Por)
Rapid Wien (Aut)

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout round, in which they will be joined by the eight third-placed teams from the Champions League group stage

Matchdays:
September 16; September 30; October 21; November 4; December 1/2; December 15/16

AUSTRIA

July 31: Kapfenberger 3 Mattersburg 1; Ried 1 LASK 0.
Aug 1: Wiener Neustadt 0 Austria 0; Rapid 2 Salzburg 1; Wacker 2 Sturm 2.
Aug 7: LASK 0 Kapfenberger 1; Salzburg 4 Wiener Neustadt 2; Mattersburg 0 Wacker 2.
Aug 8: Sturm 0 Rapid 2; Austria 0 Ried 1.
Aug 21: Wacker 2 LASK 0; Wiener Neustadt 0 Ried 5; Kapfenberger 1 Austria 1.
Aug 22: Rapid 2 Mattersburg 0.

AUSTRIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ried	5	4	0	1	11	4	12
Wacker	4	3	1	0	10	2	10
Rapid	5	3	0	2	7	7	9
Austria	5	2	2	1	7	5	8
Kapfenberger	5	2	2	1	5	4	8
Sturm	4	2	1	1	7	4	7
W Neustadt	5	2	1	2	9	10	7
Salzburg	3	1	1	1	5	4	4
LASK	5	0	0	5	3	13	0
Mattersburg	5	0	0	5	2	13	0

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated

BELGIUM

Regular season
July 30: Standard 1 Zulte Waregem 1.
July 31: Kortrijk 1 Club Brugge 0; Mechelen 2 Lokeren 0; Westerlo 0 Gent 1; Anderlecht 4 Eupen 1; St Truiden 1 Lierse 0.
Aug 1: Cercle Brugge 1 Charleroi 1; Genk 2 Germinal Beerschot 1.
Aug 6: Lierse 1 Standard 4.
Aug 7: Club Brugge 4 St Truiden 1; Zulte Waregem 1 Mechelen 2; Charleroi 0 Anderlecht 0; Lokeren 1 Kortrijk 1; Eupen 0 Westerlo 1.
Aug 8: Gent 0 Genk 4; Germinal Beerschot 0 Cercle Brugge 0.
Aug 14: Standard 3 Lokeren 3; Anderlecht 4 Germinal Beerschot 0; Gent 2 Eupen 1; Kortrijk 2 St Truiden 0; Mechelen 1 Lierse 0; Westerlo 1 Zulte Waregem 1.
Aug 15: Genk 5 Charleroi 0; Cercle Brugge 3 Club Brugge 1.
Aug 20: St Truiden 1 Standard 0.
Aug 21: Germinal Beerschot 0 Westerlo 0; Zulte Waregem 4 Cercle 0; Lokeren 0 Anderlecht 3; Lierse 1 Kortrijk 2.
Aug 22: Charleroi 1 Gent 3; Club Brugge 1 Mechelen 2; Eupen 1 Genk 4.

BELGIUM – REGULAR	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Genk	4	4	0	0	15	2	12
Mechelen	4	4	0	0	7	2	12
Anderlecht	4	3	1	0	11	1	10
Kortrijk	4	3	1	0	6	2	10
Gent	4	3	0	1	6	6	9
St Truiden	4	2	0	2	3	6	6
Z Waregem	4	1	2	1	7	4	5
Standard	4	1	2	1	8	6	5
Westerlo	4	1	2	1	2	2	5
Cercle Brugge	4	1	2	1	4	6	5
Club Brugge	4	1	0	3	6	7	3
Lokeren	4	0	2	2	4	9	2
Germinal B	4	0	2	2	1	6	2
Charleroi	4	0	2	2	2	9	2
Lierse	4	0	0	4	2	8	0
Eupen	4	0	0	4	3	11	0

30-round regular season (15x2) – top 6 will enter championship play-offs, 7th to 14th will enter Europa League place play-offs, bottom 2 will enter rel/prom play-offs (1 of them will definitely go down)

BULGARIA

July 31: Vidima-Rakovski 1 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1; Cherno More 2 Pirin 1; Slavia 0 Kaliakra 1; Lovech 2 Minyor 1.
Aug 1: Montana 0 Lokomotiv Sofia 1; CSKA 0 Levski 1.
Aug 2: Chernomorets 0 Akademik 0.
Aug 7: Minyor 1 Slavia 2; Pirin 2 Sliven 1; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2 Cherno More 0; Akademik 1 Vidima-Rakovski 2; Kaliakra 0 Montana 0.
Aug 8: Beroe 1 Lovech 1; CSKA 1 Chernomorets 2.
Aug 9: Levski 3 Lokomotiv Sofia 1.
Aug 14: Vidima-Rakovski 2 CSKA 2; Cherno More 1 Akademik 0; Sliven 0 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1; Montana 3 Minyor 1; Lovech 2 Pirin 1.
Aug 15: Slavia 1 Beroe 2; Chernomorets 2 Levski 1.
Aug 16: Lokomotiv Sofia 4 Kaliakra 0.
Aug 21: Beroe 2 Montana 1; Pirin 0 Slavia 2; Akademik 0 Sliven 1; Chernomorets 1 Vidima-Rakovski 0.
Aug 22: Levski 3 Kaliakra 0; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2 Lovech 2; CSKA 1 Cherno More 0.

BULGARIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chernomorets	4	3	1	0	5	2	10
Levski	4	3	0	1	8	3	9
Lok Plovdiv	4	2	2	0	6	3	8
Lovech	4	2	2	0	7	5	8
Beroe	3	2	1	0	5	3	7
Lok Sofia	3	2	0	1	6	3	6
Slavia	4	2	0	2	5	4	6
Cherno More	4	2	0	2	3	4	6
V-Rakovksi	4	1	2	1	5	5	5
Montana	4	1	1	2	4	4	4
CSKA	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Kaliakra	4	1	1	2	1	7	4
Sliven	3	1	0	2	2	3	3
Pirin	4	1	0	3	4	7	3
Akademik	4	0	1	3	1	4	1
Minyor	3	0	0	3	3	7	0

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated; 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

CROATIA

July 30: Hrvatski Dragovoljac 1 Lokomotiva 2; Inter 0 Slaven 1.
July 31: Istra 0 Zagreb 2; Sibenik 0 Cibalia 0; Zadar 2 Karlovac 0; Split 4 Varazdin 0; Dinamo 1 Rijeka 2.
Aug 1: Osijek 2 Hajduk 2.
Aug 6: Zagreb 0 Osijek 0.
Aug 7: Rijeka 3 Hrvatski Dragovoljac 0; Karlovac 1 Split 0; Slaven 2 Zadar 0; Cibalia 1 Inter 0; Lokomotiva 1 Istra 0; Varazdin 1 Dinamo 1.
Aug 8: Hajduk 2 Sibenik 0.
Aug 13: Hrvatski Dragovoljac 1 Istra 1.
Aug 14: Osijek 0 Lokomotiva 0; Inter 0 Hajduk 5; Sibenik 0 Zagreb 1; Zadar 0 Cibalia 0; Split 3 Slaven 0; Dinamo 4 Karlovac 2; Rijeka 1 Varazdin 1.
Aug 20: Zagreb 2 Inter 1.
Aug 21: Istra 1 Osijek 2; Varazdin 2 Hrvatski Dragovoljac 0; Karlovac 0 Rijeka 1; Cibalia 0 Split 1; Lokomotiva 0 Sibenik 0.
Aug 22: Slaven 0 Dinamo 2; Hajduk 4 Zadar 1.

CROATIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hajduk	5	4	1	0	19	4	13
Rijeka	5	4	1	0	8	2	13
Zagreb	5	4	1	0	8	2	13
Dinamo	5	3	1	1	12	6	10
Split	5	3	0	2	8	2	9
Slaven	5	3	0	2	4	5	9
Cibalia	5	2	2	1	4	1	8
Lokomotiva	5	2	2	1	4	4	8
Varazdin	5	2	2	1	6	7	8
Karlovac	5	2	0	3	6	7	6
Osijek	5	1	3	1	4	6	6
Zadar	5	1	1	3	4	8	4
Sibenik	5	0	2	3	0	4	2
H Dragovoljac	5	0	1	4	3	12	1
Istra	5	0	1	4	3	12	1
Inter	5	0	0	5	1	12	0

30-round season (15x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

CZECH REPUBLIC

July 30: Usti nad Labem 0 Liberec 0.
July 31: Slavia 1 Mlada Boleslav 0; Slovacko 2 Hradec Kralove 1.
Aug 1: Ostrava 3 Brno 0; Plzen 2 Bohemians 1905 1; Ceske Budejovice 1 Sparta 0; Jablonec 1 Teplice 1.
Aug 2: Pribram 0 Olomouc 0.
Aug 6: Brno 2 Slavia 3.
Aug 7: Bohemians 1905 1 Slovacko 0.
Aug 8: Mlada Boleslav 3 Pribram 0; Olomouc 3 Usti nad Labem 0; Liberec 1 Jablonec 1; Sparta 4 Ostrava 0.
Aug 9: Hradec Kralove 0 Plzen 3; Teplice 1 Ceske Budejovice 1.
Aug 13: Pribram 0 Sparta 1.
Aug 14: Ostrava 1 Olomouc 2.
Aug 15: Jablonec 3 Bohemians 1905 1; Plzen 3 Slovacko 0; Ceske Budejovice 0 Hradec Kralove 0; Slavia 1 Liberec 3.
Aug 16: Usti nad Labem 0 Teplice 2; Brno 3 Mlada Boleslav 1.
Aug 20: Hradec Kralove 1 Jablonec 0.
Aug 21: Liberec 0 Pribram 0; Slovacko 1 Usti nad Labem 1; Sparta 0 Plzen 1.
Aug 22: Bohemians 1905 2 Ceske Budejovice 2; Mlada Boleslav 1 Ostrava 0; Olomouc 3 Brno 0.

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Still going...Giggs (centre)

ENGLAND

Omen for Red Devils

Manchester United beat Chelsea 3-1 in the Community Shield – with four of the previous five winners having gone on to win the league.

A week later, Ryan Giggs scored United's third goal in their 3-0 league win over Newcastle United. He has now scored in every one of the Premier League's 19 seasons.

FAROE ISLANDS

Marking the occasion

Sorin Anghel marked his 250th appearance for EB/Streymur by scoring the only goal in the Faroese Cup Final as his side beat IF Fuglafjordur.

FRANCE

Caen shock champions

Champions Marseille lost their opening game 2-1 at home to promoted Caen. "Honestly, I wasn't expecting that," said Caen coach Franck Dumas. "Go and look at the players in the dressing room – they're like kids in there."

After scoring the winner against Spain in the Euro Under-19 Final, Alexandre Lacazette played for Lyon against Celtic nine hours later and then again, versus Milan, the next day to make it three games in three days.

Upset...Yohan Mello (right) and Caen beat OM

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Plzen	6	5	1	0	14	5	16
Olomouc	6	4	2	0	14	4	14
M Boleslav	6	3	1	2	8	5	10
Sparta	6	3	0	3	8	5	9
C Budejovice	6	1	5	0	5	4	8
Slavia	5	2	2	1	7	7	8
Jablonec	6	2	2	2	7	8	8
H Kralove	6	2	2	2	5	7	8
Liberec	6	1	4	1	6	5	7
Slovacko	6	2	1	3	7	8	7
Boh'ians 1905	6	1	3	2	7	9	6
Pribram	6	1	3	2	2	5	6
Teplice	5	1	2	2	5	7	5
Ostrava	6	1	2	3	5	8	5
Usti	6	1	2	3	4	9	5
Brno	6	1	0	5	6	14	3

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

DENMARK

July 31: Copenhagen 1 AaB 1; SonderjyskE 3 Esbjerg 0.
Aug 1: Randers 0 Nordsjaelland 2; Silkeborg 2 Lyngby 2; Brondby 1 Midtjylland 0.
Aug 2: Horsens 1 OB 0.
Aug 7: Esbjerg 0 Midtjylland 3; AaB 0 Silkeborg 0.
Aug 8: Horsens 0 Randers 0; Lyngby 1 SonderjyskE 0; Nordsjaelland 1 Brondby 3; OB 2 Copenhagen 3.
Aug 14: Copenhagen 2 Nordsjaelland 0; SonderjyskE 1 OB 3.
Aug 15: Silkeborg 1 Horsens 2; Randers 2 Lyngby 1; Brondby 1 Esbjerg 1.
Aug 16: Midtjylland 2 AaB 1.
Aug 21: Copenhagen 3 Lyngby 0; AaB 0 Esbjerg 2.
Aug 22: SonderjyskE 2 Horsens 0; Silkeborg 1 Randers 1; Brondby 2 OB 2.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Copenhagen	6	5	1	0	14	5	16
Midtjylland	5	4	0	1	9	2	12
Brondby	6	3	2	1	11	7	11
SonderjyskE	6	3	0	3	9	8	9
Randers	6	2	3	1	7	7	9
OB	6	2	2	2	11	8	8
Horsens	6	2	1	3	3	6	7
Lyngby	6	2	1	3	7	11	7
Nordsjaelland	5	2	0	3	8	8	6
AaB	6	1	2	3	6	9	5
Esbjerg	6	1	1	4	4	12	4
Silkeborg	6	0	3	3	5	11	3

33-round season (11x3); bottom 2 will be relegated

ENGLAND

Saturday, August 14

Aston Villa 3 (Downing 15, Petrov 40, Milner 66)
West Ham 0 Att: 36,604

Blackburn 1 (Kalinic 14)
Everton 0 Att: 25,869

Bolton 0
Fulham 0 Att: 20,352

Chelsea 6 (Malouda 6, 90, Drogba 45, 55, 68, Lampard 63)
West Bromwich 0 Att: 41,589

Sunderland 2 (Bent pen 24, Carr og 56)
Birmingham 2 (Dann 77, Ridgewell 88) Att: 38,390

Tottenham 0
Manchester City 0 Att: 35,928

Wigan 0
Blackpool 4 (Taylor-Fletcher 16, Harewood 38, 43, Baptiste 75) Att: 16,152

Wolverhampton 2 (Jones 37, Fletcher 39)
Stoke 1 (Faye 55) Att: 27,850

Sunday, August 15

Liverpool 1 (Ngog 46)
Arsenal 1 (Reina og 90) Att: 44,722

Monday, August 16

Manchester United 3 (Berbatov 33, Fletcher 41, Giggs 85)
Newcastle 0 Att: 75,221

Saturday, August 21

Arsenal 6 (Walcott 12, 39, 58, Arshavin pen 32, Diaby 49, Chamakh 83)
Blackpool 0 Att: 60,032

Birmingham 2 (Gardner 57, 71)
Blackburn 1 (Nzonzi 54) Att: 21,394

Everton 1 (Cahill 43)
Wolverhampton 1 (Ebanks-Blake 74) Att: 37,767

Stoke 1 (Fuller 25)
Tottenham 2 (Bale 19, 30) Att: 27,243

West Bromwich 1 (Odemwingie 81)
Sunderland 0 Att: 23,624

West Ham 1 (Noble pen 79)
Bolton 3 (Upson og 48, Elmander 68, 84) Att: 32,533

Wigan 0
Chelsea 6 (Malouda 34, Anelka 48, 52, Kalou 78, 90, Benayoun 90+2) Att: 14,476

Sunday, August 22

Fulham 2 (Davies 57, Hangeland 89)
Manchester United 2 (Scholes 11, Hangeland og 84) Att: 25,643

Newcastle 6 (Barton 12, Nolan 31, 87, Carroll 34, 67, 90)
Aston Villa 0 Att: 43,546

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	2	2	0	0	12	0	6
Arsenal	2	1	1	0	7	1	4
Man Utd	2	1	1	0	5	2	4
Bolton	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Birmingham	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Wolves	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Tottenham	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Newcastle	2	1	0	1	6	3	3
Blackburn	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Blackpool	2	1	0	1	4	6	3
Aston Villa	2	1	0	1	3	6	3
West Brom	2	1	0	1	1	6	3
Fulham	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Liverpool	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Man City	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Sunderland	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Everton	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Stoke	2	0	0	2	2	4	0
West Ham	2	0	0	2	1	6	0
Wigan	2	0	0	2	0	10	0

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

LEADING GOALSCORERS

3 Andy Carroll (Newcastle)
3 Didier Drogba (Chelsea)
3 Florent Malouda (Chelsea)
3 Theo Walcott (Arsenal)

COMMUNITY SHIELD

(Super Cup)
Aug 8 - Wembley
Chelsea 1 (Kalou 83)
Manchester United 3 (Valencia 41, Hernandez 76, Berbatov 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 84,623. **Ref:** Marriner

FINLAND

July 30: KuPS 3 Oulu 1.
July 31: HJK 3 VPS 0.
Aug 1: MyPa 3 Tampere 0; TPS 2 JJK 0; Lahti 1 Inter 1; Mariehamn 2 Honka 2.
Aug 2: Jaro 5 Haka 0.
Aug 6: Haka 0 Lahti 0.
Aug 7: Oulu 1 HJK 1.
Aug 8: Honka 3 Jaro 1; Tampere 3 Mariehamn 4; JJK 1 MyPa 1; Inter 1 KuPS 3; VPS 0 TPS 3.
Aug 12: Oulu 1 MyPa 1.
Aug 13: JJK 1 KuPS 3.
Aug 14: HJK 0 Honka 1.
Aug 15: MyPa 1 Lahti 1; Inter 1 TPS 2.
Aug 16: Haka 1 Tampere 0; VPS 1 Jaro 1; Mariehamn 0 Oulu 2.
Aug 20: Jaro 2 Mariehamn 0.
Aug 21: Oulu 1 Haka 1.
Aug 22: Lahti 0 HJK 1; Tampere 0 Inter 1; TPS 3 MyPa 0.

FINLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
HJK	19	12	4	3	32	11	40
Honka	18	10	4	4	29	18	34
KuPS	18	10	3	5	33	25	33
TPS	19	8	6	5	27	20	30
Jaro	19	8	4	7	29	22	28
Inter	19	7	4	8	23	25	25
Tampere	19	7	4	8	26	31	25
MyPa	19	5	8	6	25	28	23
Haka	19	6	5	8	22	31	23
VPS	18	6	4	8	18	26	22
Mariehamn	19	5	6	8	28	30	21
JJK	18	6	2	10	20	24	20
Oulu	19	5	5	9	21	30	20
Lahti	19	2	9	8	15	27	15

26-round season (13x2); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

FRANCE

Saturday, August 7

Auxerre 2 (Pedretti 19, Le Tallec 58)
Lorient 2 (Diarra 7, Robert 68) Att: 13,000

Lens 1 (Maoulida 72)
Nancy 2 (Feret 27, Berenguer 83) Att: 31,392

Lyon 0
Monaco 0 Att: 35,275

Marseille 1 (Samassa 77)
Caen 2 (Seube 53, El Arabi 86) Att: 55,790

Nice 0
Valenciennes 0 Att: 7,833

Paris Saint-Germain 3 (Erdinc 5, Janot og 42, Nene 82)
Saint-Etienne 1 (Payet 39) Att: 25,367

Rennes 1 (Bangoura 25)
Lille 1 (Sow 62) Att: 21,442

Sochaux 2 (Butin 17, Faty 55)
Arles-Avignon 1 (Dja Djedje 10) Att: 10,381

Toulouse 2 (Braaten 36, Machado pen 85)
Brest 0 Att: 14,653

Sunday, August 8

Montpellier 1 (Bocaly 47)
Bordeaux 0 Att: 21,915

Saturday, August 14

Arles-Avignon 0
Lens 1 (Pollet 69) Att: 10,881

Brest 1 (Roux 26)
Auxerre 1 (Pedretti 83) Att: 12,934

Lorient 1 (Jouffre 11)
Nice 2 (Gace 12, Remy 69) Att: 15,181

Nancy 0
Rennes 3 (Montano 49, Brahimi 58, Bangoura 87) Att: 14,512

Saint-Etienne 3 (Sauget og 6, Perrin 57, 65)
Sochaux 2 (Boudebouz 66, Martin 67) Att: 24,013

Valenciennes 3 (Danic 47, Pujol 53, 62)
Marseille 2 (Taiwo pen 82, Ayew 85) Att: 15,430

Sunday, August 15

Bordeaux 1 (Plasil 48)
Toulouse 2 (Braaten 45, Didot 83) Att: 31,614

Caen 3 (El Arabi 2, Yatabare 16, N'Diaye 77)
Lyon 2 (Gomis 6, 23) Att: 19,137

Lille 0
Paris Saint-Germain 0 Att: 15,790

Tuesday, August 17

Monaco 0
Montpellier 0 Att: 8,917

Saturday, August 21

Auxerre 1 (Jelen 69)
Valenciennes 1 (Danic 66) Att: 8,020

Lens 2 (Adriano og 73, Roudet 83)
Monaco 2 (Niculae 19, Aubameyang 69) Att: 32,905

Lyon 1 (Makoun 19)
Brest 0 Att: 33,522

Marseille 2 (Heinze 6, Taiwo 72)
Lorient 0 Att: 53,389

Nice 1 (Fae 26)
Nancy 1 (Alo'o Efoulou 85) Att: 7,711

Rennes 0
Saint-Etienne 0 Att: 24,731

Toulouse 2 (Braaten 36, Didot 61)
Arles-Avignon 1 (Dja Djedje 64) Att: 16,233

Sunday, August 22

Montpellier 0
Caen 0 Att: 16,738

Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Hoarau 76)
Bordeaux 2 (Diarra 67, Ciani 90+4) Att: 30,073

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GERMANY

Bayern beat Schalke

Bayern Munich claimed their first silverware of the new season, beating Schalke 2-0 with goals from Thomas Muller and Miroslav Klose to win the German Super Cup.

Former Real Madrid star Raul made his competitive debut for Schalke in the game.

Bundesliga sides St Pauli and Hannover were both victims of giantkillings in the first round of the German Cup, losing 1-0 to Chemnitz and on penalties to Elversberg respectively.

Bayer Leverkusen had no problems, beating Pirmasens 11-1 with 10 second-half goals.

Super Cup winners...Bayern

ICELAND

FH stroll to victory

Two first-half penalties from captain Matthias Vilhjalmsson set FH Hafnarfjordur on their way to a 4-0 victory against KR Reykjavik in the Icelandic Cup Final. Goals from Atli Vidar Bjornsson and Atli Gudnason completed the rout.

MOLDOVA

New name, new start

Following a troublesome pre-season in which they changed their name, parted company with their coach and lost almost half their squad, Milsami are unbeaten so far this season.

Competing in the top flight as debutants last term, the team then known as Viitorul Orhei finished eighth but were in financial trouble until new backers injected much-needed funds and gave the club a new name using an abbreviation of the initials of the people who took on the project.

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Sochaux 0
Lille 0 Att: 11,436

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Toulouse	3	3	0	0	6	2	9
Caen	3	2	1	0	5	3	7
Rennes	3	1	2	0	4	1	5
Valenciennes	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
Nice	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Montpellier	3	1	2	0	1	0	5
PSG	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Lens	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Sochaux	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Lyon	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Saint-Etienne	3	1	1	1	4	5	4
Nancy	3	1	1	1	3	5	4
Marseille	3	1	0	2	5	5	3
Auxerre	3	0	3	0	4	4	3
Monaco	3	0	3	0	2	2	3
Lille	3	0	3	0	1	1	3
Bordeaux	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
Lorient	3	0	1	2	3	6	1
Brest	3	0	1	2	1	4	1
Arles-Avignon	3	0	0	3	2	5	0

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

LEADING GOALSCORER
3 Daniel Braaten (Toulouse)

TROPHEE DES CHAMPIONS

(Super Cup)
July 28 - Rades, Tunisia
Marseille 0
Paris Saint-Germain 0
No extra time. **Ref:** Trabelsi (Tun)
Marseille 5-4 on pens

GERMANY

Friday, August 20
Bayern Munich 2 (Muller 9, Schweinsteiger 90+1)
Wolfsburg 1 (Dzeko 55) Att: 69,000

Saturday, August 21
Freiburg 1 (Cisse 78)
St Pauli 3 (Boll 83, Sukuta-Pasu 89, Bartels 90+1) Att: 24,000

Hamburg 2 (Van Nistelrooy 46, 83)
Schalke 1 (Farfan 80) Att: 57,000

Hannover 2 (Rausch 21, Ya Konan 75)
Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Kohler 27) Att: 37,212

1899 Hoffenheim 4 (Ba 20, Mlapa 37, Ibisevic 41, Salihovic 43)
Werder Bremen 1 (Frings pen 3) Att: 30,150

Koln 1 (Novakovic 8)
Kaiserslautern 3 (Lakic 70, 84, Ilicevic 88) Att: 49,200

Monchengladbach 1 (Idrissou 31)
Nurnberg 1 (Hegeler 15) Att: 42,202

Sunday, August 22
Borussia Dortmund 0
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Barnetta 19, Renato Augusto 22) Att: 73,300

Mainz 2 (Allagui 26, Rasmussen 47)
Stuttgart 0 Att: 20,300

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hoffenheim	1	1	0	0	4	1	3
Kaiserslautern	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
St Pauli	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
B Leverkusen	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Mainz	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Bayern	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Hamburg	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Hannover	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
M'gladbach	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Nurnberg	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
E Frankfurt	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Schalke	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Wolfsburg	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Freiburg	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
Koln	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
B Dortmund	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Stuttgart	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Werder	1	0	0	1	1	4	0

34-round season (17x2); bottom 2 will be relegated; 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

LEADING GOALSCORERS
2 Srdjan Lakic (Kaiserslautern)
2 Ruud Van Nistelrooy (Hamburg)

SUPER CUP

Aug 7 - Augsburg
Bayern Munich 2 (Muller 75, Klose 81)
Schalke 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,662. **Ref:** Grafe

HOLLAND

Aug 6: Roda JC 0 Twente 0.
Aug 7: NEC 1 VVV 0; Heracles 3 Willem II 0; De Graafschap 3 Excelsior 0; Heerenveen 1 PSV 3.
Aug 8: Vitesse 3 Den Haag 1; Feyenoord 3 Utrecht 1; Groningen 2 Ajax 2; NAC 1 AZ 1.
Aug 14: Ajax 4 Vitesse 2; PSV 6 De Graafschap 0; VVV 1 Heracles 0; AZ 1 Groningen 1; Twente 0 Heerenveen 0.
Aug 15: Excelsior 3 Feyenoord 2; Utrecht 3 NAC 1; Willem II 3 NEC 5; Den Haag 1 Roda JC 3.
Aug 20: Excelsior 4 NEC 2.
Aug 21: Vitesse 0 Twente 3; Groningen 2 De Graafschap 1; Heerenveen 3 NAC 1; Ajax 3 Roda JC 0.
Aug 22: Utrecht 3 Willem II 0; Heracles 1 Feyenoord 1; VVV 2 Den Haag 3; PSV 3 AZ 1.

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	3	3	0	0	12	2	9
Ajax	3	2	1	0	9	4	7
Utrecht	3	2	0	1	7	4	6
NEC	3	2	0	1	8	7	6
Excelsior	3	2	0	1	7	7	6
Twente	3	1	2	0	3	0	5
Groningen	3	1	2	0	5	4	5
Heracles	3	1	1	1	4	2	4
Feyenoord	3	1	1	1	6	5	4
Heerenveen	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Roda JC	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
VVV	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
Den Haag	3	1	0	2	5	8	3
Vitesse	3	1	0	2	5	8	3
De Graafschap	3	1	0	2	4	8	3
AZ	3	0	2	1	3	5	2
NAC*	3	0	1	2	3	7	0
Willem II	3	0	0	3	3	11	0

34-round season (17x2); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd & 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-offs
**1pt deducted for financial mismanagement*

ISRAEL

Regular season
Aug 21: Ashkelon 3 Hapoel Petah Tikva 1; Hapoel Haifa 1 Hapoel Tel Aviv 0; Bnei Yehuda 0 Ramat Gan 0; Acre 1 Ashdod 2; Kiryat Shmona 2 Bnei Sakhnin 0; Netanya 4 Beitar 1.
Aug 22: Maccabi Tel Aviv 0 Maccabi Haifa 1.

ISRAEL – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Netanya	1	1	0	0	4	1	3
Ashkelon	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Kiryat Shmona	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Ashdod	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
H Haifa	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
M Haifa	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Bnei Yehuda	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Be'er Sheva	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M Petah Tikva	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Acre	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
H Tel Aviv	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
M Tel Aviv	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
H Petah Tikva	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
Bnei Sakhnin	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Beitar	1	0	0	1	1	4	0
Ramat Gan*	1	0	1	0	0	0	-6

30-round regular season (15x2) – top 6 will enter championship play-offs, 7th to 10th will enter "placement" play-offs, bottom 6 will enter relegation play-offs (2 teams will go down)
**7pts deducted for financial irregularities*

ITALY

SUPER CUP

Aug 21 - Milan
Internazionale 3 (Pandev 42, Eto'o 69, 80)
Roma 1 (Riise 20)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 65,860. **Ref:** Bergonzi

KAZAKHSTAN

KAZAKHSTAN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tobol	22	14	5	3	37	15	47
Irtysh	22	12	7	3	30	16	43
Aktobe	22	11	4	7	32	22	37
Shakhtyor	22	11	4	7	28	19	37
Lokomotiv	22	11	3	8	33	21	36
Atyrau	22	11	3	8	29	26	36
Zhetysu	22	9	7	6	22	16	34
Ordabasy	22	8	6	8	20	20	30
Kairat	22	4	8	10	11	22	20
Taraz	22	4	6	12	21	33	18
Akzhayik (R)	22	3	5	14	19	43	14
Okzhetpes (R)	22	3	4	15	16	45	13

LATVIA

LATVIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Skonto	16	14	1	1	56	9	43
Ventspils	16	12	2	2	43	10	38
Metalurgs	16	10	3	3	34	14	33
Daugava	16	9	5	2	18	9	32
Jurmala	16	7	2	7	23	24	23
Jelgava	16	4	3	9	24	28	15
Tranzits	16	3	3	10	12	26	12
Olimps/RFS	16	3	3	10	20	40	12
Blazma	16	3	1	12	11	41	10
Jauniba	16	3	1	12	8	48	10

Standings on August 23
27-round season (9x3); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

LITHUANIA

LITHUANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ekranas	18	14	3	1	42	10	45
Suduva	18	11	7	0	41	8	40
Zalgiris	18	11	5	2	33	11	38
Tauras	18	9	5	4	28	18	32
Siauliai	19	7	6	6	22	22	27
Banga	19	7	6	6	20	22	27
Kruoja	18	5	6	7	27	34	21
Klaipeda	18	2	3	13	13	47	9
Mazeikiai	19	1	5	13	13	39	8
Atletas*	19	0	4	15	9	37	-2

Standings on August 23
27-round season (9x3)
Vetra expelled from league because of financial problems; all results expunged
**6pts deducted for licence irregularities*

NORWAY

July 31: Lillestrom 2 Kongsvinger 2.
Aug 1: Viking 0 Sandefjord 0; Tromso 3 Stabaek 0; Rosenborg 4 Haugesund 3; Honefoss 2 Odd Grenland 1; Stromsgodset 3 Aalesund 1; Brann 1 Molde 1.
Aug 2: Valerenga 8 Start 1.
Aug 7: Sandefjord 1 Rosenborg 3.
Aug 8: Start 3 Brann 1; Stabaek 1 Stromsgodset 2; Molde 2 Viking 2; Kongsvinger 3 Honefoss 3; Haugesund 2 Valerenga 0; Aalesund 2 Tromso 0.
Aug 9: Odd Grenland 2 Lillestrom 1.
Aug 21: Stromsgodset 1 Brann 1.
Aug 22: Viking 2 Start 2; Lillestrom 1 Aalesund 0; Tromso 3 Odd Grenland 1; Honefoss 0 Stabaek 4; Kongsvinger 0 Haugesund 1; Rosenborg 3 Molde 1.

NORWAY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rosenborg	21	14	7	0	42	15	49
Tromso	21	11	6	4	27	17	39
Valerenga	20	11	4	5	46	23	37
Aalesund	21	10	3	8	29	23	33
Stromsgodset	21	10	3	8	32	37	33
Viking	21	8	8	5	32	24	32
Start	21	9	5	7	38	41	32
Haugesund	21	8	6	7	35	28	30
Lillestrom	21	6	10	5	33	26	28
Odd Grenland	21	7	7	7	33	34	28
Stabaek	21	7	6	8	33	31	27
Brann	21	5	8	8	30	33	23
Molde	21	4	8	9	31	41	20
Honefoss	21	5	5	11	18	42	20
Kongsvinger	21	3	5	13	20	43	14
Sandefjord	20	1	5	14	13	34	8

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated; 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-offs

POLAND

Aug 6: Belchatow 2 Polonia Bytom 0; Gornik 0 Polonia Warsaw 2.
Aug 7: Widzew 1 Lech 1; Korona 1 Zaglebie 1.
Aug 8: Lechia 0 Ruch 0; Slask 0 Jagiellonia 0; Wisla 1 Arka 0.
Aug 13: Cracovia 2 Slask 3; Polonia Warsaw 3 Legia 0.
Aug 14: Jagiellonia 3 Belchatow 1; Polonia Bytom 1 Lechia 1; Lech 0 Arka 0; Zaglebie 1 Gornik 2.
Aug 15: Korona 1 Widzew 2; Ruch 2 Wisla 0.
Aug 16: Legia 2 Cracovia 1.
Aug 20: Polonia Warsaw 2 Zaglebie 1; Slask 0 Legia 1.
Aug 21: Belchatow 3 Ruch 2; Widzew 0 Wisla 1; Polonia Bytom 0 Korona 1; Arka 2 Gornik 0.

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PORTUGAL

Porto's trophy

Andre Villas-Boas began his tenure at Porto with a 2-0 win against Benfica in the Portuguese Super Cup.

SCOTLAND

Debutant is spot on

Paul Hartley, who was signed from Bristol City, scored an unusual hat-trick on his competitive debut for Aberdeen with three penalties against Hamilton on the opening day of the Scottish Premier League season.

Hat-trick...Hartley

TURKEY

Off the mark in style

Teofilo Gutierrez scored a second-half hat-trick as Trabzonspor beat Bursaspor 3-0 in the Turkish Super Cup. The Colombia striker failed to score a single league goal last season during his first campaign in Turkey.

UKRAINE

Points docked and fines given to match fixers

Metalist Kharkiv and Karpaty Lviv have both been deducted nine points and fined $25,000 after being found guilty of fixing a league game in 2008.

The Ukraine Football Federation also gave life bans to Metalist director Yevhen Krasnikov and former Karpaty Lviv defender Sergei Lashchenkov, who now plays for Olimpik Baku in Azerbaijan. Lashchenkov was sent off during the game, which Metalist won 4-0.

In addition to the lifetime bans, the players of Karpaty Lviv have been issued with penalty fines of between $5,000 and $10,000.

Aug 22: Lech 5 Cracovia 0; Lechia 1 Jagiellonia 2.

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Polonia W	3	3	0	0	7	1	9
Jagiellonia	3	2	1	0	5	2	7
Belchatow	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Wisla	3	2	0	1	2	2	6
Legia	3	2	0	1	3	4	6
Lech	3	1	2	0	6	1	5
Ruch	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Arka	3	1	1	1	2	1	4
Korona	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Slask	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Widzew	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Gornik	3	1	0	2	2	5	3
Lechia	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Zaglebie	3	0	1	2	3	5	1
Polonia B	3	0	1	2	1	4	1
Cracovia	3	0	0	3	3	10	0

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

PORTUGAL

Aug 13: Braga 3 Portimonense 1.
Aug 14: Maritimo 0 Setubal 1; Naval 0 Porto 1; Pacos Ferreira 1 Sporting 0.
Aug 15: Rio Ave 0 Nacional 1; Beira Mar 0 Uniao Leiria 0; Benfica 1 Academica 2.
Aug 16: Olhanense 0 Guimaraes 0.
Aug 20: Academica 1 Olhanense 1.
Aug 21: Setubal 0 Braga 0; Nacional 2 Benfica 1.
Aug 22: Portimonense 0 Naval 1; Uniao Leiria 0 Pacos Ferreira 0; Sporting 1 Maritimo 0; Porto 3 Beira Mar 0.

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Nacional	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
Braga	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Academica	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
P Ferreira	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Setubal	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Naval	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Sporting	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Olhanense	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Uniao Leiria	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Guimaraes	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Beira Mar	2	0	1	1	0	3	1
Rio Ave	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Benfica	2	0	0	2	2	4	0
Maritimo	2	0	0	2	0	2	0
Portimonense	2	0	0	2	1	4	0

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

July 30: UCD 0 Galway 1; Drogheda 0 Bray 2; Bohemians 1 St Patrick's 1.
July 31: Sligo 1 Dundalk 0.
Aug 1: Fingal 3 Shamrock 3.
Aug 6: St Patrick's 2 Drogheda 0; Galway 0 Fingal 1; Dundalk 1 UCD 1; Bray 1 Sligo 3.
Aug 8: Shamrock 3 Bohemians 0.
Aug 13: Bohemians 0 Galway 2; Bray 3 St Patrick's 2; Drogheda 0 Shamrock 2; Fingal 1 Dundalk 0.
Aug 14: Sligo 4 UCD 0.
Aug 17: Bohemians 2 Bray 0.
Aug 20: Dundalk 1 Bohemians 2; Galway 2 Drogheda 1; St Patrick's 0 Sligo 0; UCD 1 Fingal 2; Shamrock 4 Bray 1.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shamrock	26	14	9	3	38	19	51
St Patrick's	26	13	7	6	40	18	46
Bohemians	26	13	7	6	36	23	46
Fingal	26	11	11	4	36	24	44
Sligo	27	11	10	6	43	24	43
Dundalk	26	9	6	11	28	34	33
Galway	27	8	8	11	27	34	32
UCD	26	8	6	12	30	31	30
Drogheda	26	4	6	16	23	52	18
Bray	26	3	4	19	19	61	13

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd & 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-offs

ROMANIA

July 30: Otelul 2 Pandurii 0; Vaslui 1 Tirgu-Mures 1.
July 31: Gloria 1 Astra 1; Steaua 2 Univ Craiova 1; Urziceni 0 Rapid 0.
Aug 1: Gaz Metan 2 Timisoara 2; Brasov 3 Univ Cluj 1; Dinamo 5 Sportul 3.
Aug 2: CFR 2 Victoria 0.
Aug 6: Univ Cluj 1 Vaslui 1; Rapid 0 Otelul 0; Victoria 1 Univ Craiova 0.
Aug 7: Tirgu-Mures 1 Urziceni 0; Brasov 1 Steaua 1.
Aug 8: Astra 0 Gaz Metan 2; Timisoara 3 CFR 2; Pandurii 2 Dinamo 2.
Aug 9: Sportul 4 Gloria 2.
Aug 13: CFR 2 Astra 2; Gloria 3 Pandurii 0.
Aug 14: Urziceni 0 Univ Cluj 1; Vaslui 2 Brasov 1.
Aug 15: Gaz Metan 3 Sportul 0; Dinamo 3 Rapid 2; Univ Craiova 1 Timisoara 1.
Aug 16: Otelul 1 Tirgu-Mures 0; Steaua 2 Victoria 1.
Aug 20: Sportul 3 CFR 0; Rapid 2 Gloria 0.
Aug 21: Tirgu-Mures 2 Dinamo 6; Astra 2 Univ Craiova 2; Pandurii 0 Gaz Metan 0.
Aug 22: Univ Cluj 2 Otelul 1; Vaslui 0 Steaua 3; Timisoara 2 Victoria 1.

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	5	4	1	0	18	10	13
Steaua	5	4	1	0	10	4	13
Gaz Metan	5	3	2	0	10	4	11
Otelul	5	3	1	1	5	2	10
Timisoara	5	2	3	0	10	8	9
Rapid	5	2	2	1	6	3	8
Brasov	4	2	1	1	6	4	7
Univ Cluj	5	2	1	2	6	7	7
Sportul	5	2	0	3	10	11	6
Gloria	5	1	2	2	8	9	5
CFR	5	1	2	2	6	8	5
Vaslui	5	1	2	2	4	8	5
Tirgu-Mures	5	1	1	3	4	9	4
Univ Craiova	5	0	3	2	4	6	3
Astra	5	0	3	2	6	9	3
Victoria	5	1	0	4	5	9	3
Pandurii	5	0	3	2	2	7	3
Urziceni	4	0	2	2	0	2	2

34-round season (17x2); bottom 4 will be relegated

RUSSIA

July 30: Saturn 1 Anzhi 0; Spartak Nalchik 2 Amkar 1.
July 31: Zenit 2 Rubin 0; Terek 2 Alania 0; Dynamo 1 Krylia Sovetov 1.
Aug 1: Spartak Moscow 1 CSKA 2; Lokomotiv 0 Rostov 1.
Aug 2: Tom 3 Sibir 2.
Aug 6: Rostov 1 Terek 0.
Aug 7: Anzhi 1 Amkar 0; Krylia Sovetov 0 Lokomotiv 0.
Aug 8: Sibir 0 Saturn 1; Rubin 2 Tom 1; Alania 1 Spartak Nalchik 0.
Aug 14: Tom 1 Krylia Sovetov 1; Zenit 1 Dynamo 1; Saturn 0 Rostov 2; Spartak Nalchik 4 Sibir 2.
Aug 15: Amkar 1 Alania 0; CSKA 4 Anzhi 0; Terek 1 Rubin 1; Lokomotiv 2 Spartak Moscow 3.
Aug 20: Rostov 1 Spartak Nalchik 1.
Aug 21: Spartak Moscow 4 Tom 2; Krylia Sovetov 1 Terek 3.
Aug 22: Sibir 1 Amkar 0; Dynamo 3 Lokomotiv 0; Rubin 2 Saturn 0; Alania 0 Anzhi 0.

RUSSIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zenit	16	12	4	0	26	7	40
Rubin	18	10	6	2	20	7	36
CSKA	16	10	3	3	28	13	33
Spartak N	18	9	5	4	26	19	32
Rostov	18	9	2	7	20	23	29
Spartak M	17	7	5	5	27	22	26
Terek	18	6	6	6	19	16	24
Dynamo	17	5	8	4	20	17	23
Lokomotiv	18	6	5	7	22	21	23
Tom	18	6	4	8	24	29	22
Anzhi	18	5	5	8	17	21	20
Saturn	18	5	5	8	12	17	20
Alania	18	5	4	9	16	25	19
Amkar	18	4	3	11	11	20	15
Sibir	18	3	3	12	24	39	12
Krylia Sovetov	18	2	6	10	11	27	12

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

SCOTLAND

Regular season

Aug 14: Inverness 0 Celtic 1; Aberdeen 4 Hamilton 0; Hearts 1 St Johnstone 1; Rangers 2 Kilmarnock 1; St Mirren 1 Dundee United 1.
Aug 15: Motherwell 2 Hibernian 3.
Aug 21: Hamilton 0 Hearts 4; St Johnstone 0 Aberdeen 1.
Aug 22: Hibernian 0 Rangers 3; Celtic 4 St Mirren 0; Kilmarnock 0 Motherwell 1; Dundee United 0 Inverness 4.

SCOTLAND – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Aberdeen	2	2	0	0	5	0	6
Celtic	2	2	0	0	5	0	6
Rangers	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Hearts	2	1	1	0	5	1	4
Inverness	2	1	0	1	4	1	3
Motherwell	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Hibernian	2	1	0	1	3	5	3
St Johnstone	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Dundee Utd	2	0	1	1	1	5	1
St Mirren	2	0	1	1	1	5	1
Kilmarnock	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
Hamilton	2	0	0	2	0	8	0

33-round regular season (11x3) – top 6 will form championship group, bottom 6 will form relegation group (1 will go down)

SERBIA

Aug 14: Smederevo 0 Red Star 0; Spartak 1 BSK 1; Borac 1 Javor 1; OFK 1 Metalac 0; Partizan 2 Indjija 1.
Aug 15: Vojvodina 0 Jagodina 0; Rad 4 Cukaricki 0; Hajduk 1 Sloboda Sevojno 2.
Aug 21: Sloboda Sevojno 1 OFK 0; Metalac 0 Rad 0; Cukaricki 0 Borac 1; BSK 0 Vojvodina 2; Jagodina 1 Smederevo 0.
Aug 22: Javor 0 Spartak 0; Indjija 0 Red Star 1.

SERBIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
S Sevojno	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
Rad	2	1	1	0	4	0	4
Vojvodina	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Borac	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Jagodina	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Red Star	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Partizan	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
OFK	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Javor	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Spartak	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Metalac	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Smederevo	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
BSK	2	0	1	1	1	3	1
Hajduk	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Indjija	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
Cukaricki	2	0	0	2	0	5	0

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

SLOVAKIA

July 31: Dukla 1 Zilina 2; Senica 1 Dubnica 0; Nitra 1 Kosice 1; Ruzomberok 2 DAC 0; Spartak 1 Tatran 0.
Aug 1: Slovan 3 Zlate Moravce 0.
Aug 7: Kosice 0 Ruzomberok 1; Zilina 5 Nitra 1; Zlate Moravce 1 Tatran 0; Dubnica 0 Spartak 4; DAC 2 Senica 3.
Aug 8: Slovan 2 Dukla 0.
Aug 13: Ruzomberok 1 Zilina 1.
Aug 14: Dukla 0 Zlate Moravce 0; Nitra 1 Slovan 0; Senica 1 Kosice 0; Spartak 1 DAC 1; Tatran 1 Dubnica 1.
Aug 21: Kosice 0 Spartak 2; Zilina 0 Senica 0; Dukla 2 Nitra 0; Zlate Moravce 2 Dubnica 1; DAC 2 Tatran 1.
Aug 22: Slovan 3 Ruzomberok 0.

SLOVAKIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slovan	6	4	1	1	12	3	13
Spartak	6	4	1	1	11	3	13
Senica	6	4	1	1	6	5	13
Zilina	6	3	3	0	12	6	12
Zlate Moravce	6	3	1	2	6	6	10
Ruzomberok	6	3	1	2	5	5	10
Nitra	6	3	1	2	7	10	10
Dukla	6	2	2	2	6	5	8
DAC	6	1	1	4	5	10	4
Dubnica	6	1	1	4	5	11	4
Kosice	6	0	2	4	2	8	2
Tatran	6	0	1	5	2	7	1

33-round season (11x3); bottom team will be relegated

SLOVENIA

July 31: Primorje 0 Domzale 0; Koper 1 Triglav 1; Celje 5 Rudar 1.
Aug 1: Maribor 3 Gorica 1.
Aug 2: Olimpija 0 Nafta 1.
Aug 7: Nafta 3 Domzale 2; Rudar 2 Koper 1; Gorica 3 Celje 3.
Aug 8: Triglav 3 Primorje 2.
Aug 14: Maribor 3 Nafta 1; Celje 1 Olimpija 1; Koper 1 Gorica 0; Domzale 3 Triglav 0.
Aug 15: Primorje 1 Rudar 1.
Aug 21: Nafta 2 Triglav 1; Gorica 3 Primorje 2; Rudar 0 Domzale 1.
Aug 22: Maribor 2 Celje 0; Olimpija 1 Koper 2.

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Double...Funes Mori (left)

ARGENTINA

Three in a row for River

River Plate beat Independiente 3-2 for a third consecutive league win – something they had not achieved for three years – to remain level at the top of the table. Rogelio Funes Mori scored twice, with Paulo Ferrari also on target.

Newly promoted All Boys added to Boca Juniors' woes with a 2-0 win.

BRAZIL

Robinho says goodbye

Robinho ended his six-month loan spell at Santos on a high by helping the side win the Brazilian Cup for the first time, beating Vitoria 3-2 to qualify for next year's Libertadores. Santos also won the Paulista championship during the Manchester City and Brazil winger's time at the club.

Sixteen coaches have now lost their jobs since the start of this year's championship following Ceara's sacking of Estevam Soares and the dismissal of Roberto Fernandes by Atletico Goianiense.

Just six of the division's 20 clubs – Fluminense, Santos, Botafogo, Guarani, Flamengo and Atletico Mineiro – still have the same coach that they started the campaign with.

Farewell...Robinho

SLOVENIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maribor	5	4	1	0	13	2	13
Domzale	6	4	1	1	9	3	13
Nafta	6	4	0	2	9	8	12
Koper	6	3	1	2	9	7	10
Gorica	6	2	2	2	10	11	8
Rudar	6	2	2	2	7	9	8
Celje	6	1	3	2	10	9	6
Triglav	6	1	2	3	6	14	5
Olimpija	5	0	2	3	5	9	2
Primorje	6	0	2	4	7	13	2

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

SPAIN

SUPER CUP

1st leg

Aug 14
Sevilla 3 (Luis Fabiano 62, Kanoute 73, 82)
Barcelona 1 (Ibrahimovic 20)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 38,000. **Ref:** Muniz Fernandez

2nd leg

Aug 21
Barcelona 4 (Konko og 14, Messi 25, 44, 90)
Sevilla 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 67,414. **Ref:** Teixeira Vitienes
Barcelona 5-3 on agg

SWEDEN

July 31: Mjallby 0 AIK 0; Djurgardens 0 Hacken 3.
Aug 1: Malmo 1 GAIS 0; Elfsborg 1 Gefle 0; IFK 3 Kalmar 1.
Aug 2: Atvidabergs 0 Orebro 2; Trelleborgs 1 Halmstads 0; Brommapojkarna 1 Helsingborgs 3.
Aug 5: Helsingborgs 3 Djurgardens 3.
Aug 7: Orebro 0 Malmo 3; GAIS 3 Mjallby 2.
Aug 8: Kalmar 2 Trelleborgs 1; AIK 2 Brommapojkarna 1; Hacken 1 IFK 5; Gefle 4 Atvidabergs 2; Halmstads 1 Elfsborg 3.
Aug 14: Elfsborg 4 Kalmar 1; AIK 1 GAIS 0.
Aug 15: Malmo 2 Gefle 0; IFK 0 Helsingborgs 0.
Aug 16: Trelleborgs 3 Hacken 2; Atvidabergs 1 Halmstads 1; Mjallby 1 Orebro 0.
Aug 18: Brommapojkarna 0 Djurgardens 1.
Aug 21: Gefle 3 Mjallby 3.
Aug 22: Hacken 1 Elfsborg 1; Djurgardens 2 IFK 0; Kalmar 1 Atvidabergs 2.

SWEDEN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Helsingborgs	19	13	4	2	30	13	43
Malmo	19	13	3	3	36	18	42
Elfsborg	20	9	7	4	39	25	34
Orebro	19	10	2	7	25	21	32
Mjallby	20	8	6	6	24	18	30
Djurgardens	20	7	5	8	21	24	26
IFK	20	6	7	7	27	17	25
Kalmar	20	6	7	7	24	29	25
GAIS	19	6	6	7	16	20	24
Trelleborgs	19	7	3	9	20	29	24
Hacken	20	6	5	9	23	31	23
AIK	19	6	4	9	16	21	22
Bromm'karna	19	6	4	9	15	21	22
Halmstads	19	6	3	10	18	26	21
Gefle	20	5	5	10	22	29	20
Atvidabergs	20	4	5	11	19	33	17

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated; 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

SWITZERLAND

July 31: Zurich 1 Sion 1; Bellinzona 2 Young Boys 1.
Aug 1: Thun 2 Grasshopper 2; Lucerne 4 Xamax 2; Basle 3 St Gallen 0.
Aug 7: Bellinzona 1 Basle 0; Xamax 3 Zurich 4.
Aug 8: Lucerne 2 Sion 3; Grasshopper 1 Young Boys 2; Thun 3 St Gallen 0.
Aug 14: Basle 1 Lucerne 4; Young Boys 0 Xamax 1.
Aug 15: Sion 1 Thun 1; St Gallen 1 Grasshopper 2; Zurich 2 Bellinzona 2.
Aug 21: St Gallen 1 Sion 1; Thun 1 Basle 1.
Aug 22: Grasshopper 0 Lucerne 3; Xamax 1 Bellinzona 2; Young Boys 1 Zurich 0.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lucerne	6	4	1	1	18	7	13
Thun	6	2	4	0	11	7	10
Basle	6	3	1	2	10	9	10
Bellinzona	6	3	1	2	9	9	10
Sion	6	2	3	1	9	7	9
Zurich	6	2	2	2	11	10	8
Young Boys	6	2	2	2	6	6	8
Grasshopper	6	1	2	3	6	11	5
Xamax	6	1	1	4	10	14	4
St Gallen	6	1	1	4	5	15	4

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

TURKEY

Aug 14: Gaziantepspor 0 Kasimpasa 0; Sivasspor 2 Galatasaray 1; Bucaspor 0 Besiktas 1; Eskisehirspor 0 Genclerbirligi 0.
Aug 15: Ankaragucu 0 Trabzonspor 2; Karabukspor 2 Manisaspor 1; Fenerbahce 4 Antalyaspor 0.
Aug 16: Istanbul BB 0 Kayserispor 2; Bursaspor 1 Konyaspor 0.
Aug 20: Konyaspor 2 Eskisehirspor 1; Kayserispor 1 Karabukspor 0.
Aug 21: Antalyaspor 1 Sivasspor 1; Besiktas 0 Istanbul BB 2.
Aug 22: Genclerbirligi 0 Gaziantepspor 0; Galatasaray 0 Bursaspor 2; Manisaspor 0 Ankaragucu 3.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bursaspor	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Kayserispor	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Sivasspor	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Fenerbahce	1	1	0	0	4	0	3
Trabzonspor	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Ankaragucu	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Istanbul BB	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Karabukspor	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Konyaspor	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Besiktas	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Gaziantepspor	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Genclerbirligi	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Kasimpasa	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Eskisehirspor	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Antalyaspor	2	0	1	1	1	5	1
Bucaspor	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Galatasaray	2	0	0	2	1	4	0
Manisaspor	2	0	0	2	1	5	0

34-round season (17x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

UKRAINE

July 30: Arsenal 1 Shakhtar 3; Vorskla 0 Tavriya 0.
July 31: Sevastopol 0 Dynamo 3; Metalurh Zaporizhya 0 Volyn 1; Kryvbas 1 Illichivets 0.
Aug 1: Zorya 2 Karpaty 2; Dnipro 3 Obolon 0; Metalurh Donetsk 0 Metalist 3.
Aug 6: Illichivets 0 Metalurh Zaporizhya 0.
Aug 7: Shakhtar 5 Sevastopol 0; Volyn 0 Zorya 1; Metalist 2 Vorskla 3; Obolon 1 Kryvbas 1.
Aug 8: Karpaty 2 Arsenal 1; Tavriya 0 Dnipro 1; Dynamo 1 Metalurh Donetsk 0.
Aug 13: Zorya 2 Illichivets 2.
Aug 14: Vorskla 3 Dynamo 1; Kryvbas 1 Tavriya 4; Dnipro 0 Metalist 1; Metalurh Zaporizhya 1 Obolon 2.
Aug 15: Arsenal 1 Volyn 1; Shakhtar 1 Karpaty 0; Sevastopol 0 Metalurh Donetsk 1.
Aug 20: Obolon 1 Zorya 0.
Aug 21: Volyn 0 Shakhtar 1; Illichivets 2 Arsenal 2; Metalurh Donetsk 2 Vorskla 0.
Aug 22: Tavriya 2 Metalurh Zaporizhya 0; Dynamo 0 Dnipro 0; Karpaty 2 Sevastopol 1; Metalist 3 Kryvbas 4.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	7	6	1	0	14	2	19
Dnipro	7	5	1	1	12	2	16
Dynamo	7	4	2	1	11	7	14
Vorskla	7	4	1	2	12	8	13
Tavriya	7	3	1	3	9	6	10
Metalurh D	7	3	1	3	8	7	10
Kryvbas	7	2	3	2	7	10	9
Arsenal	7	2	2	3	8	9	8
Obolon	7	2	2	3	6	11	8
Illichivets	7	1	4	2	9	12	7
Zorya	7	1	3	3	5	8	6
Volyn	7	1	2	4	2	9	5
Sevastopol	7	1	2	4	2	11	5
Karpaty*	7	3	2	2	7	6	2
Metalurh Z	7	0	2	5	2	8	2
Metalist*	7	3	1	3	11	9	1

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated
**9pts deducted for match-fixing*

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Semi-finals

1st legs

July 27
Guadalajara (Mex) 1 (Arellano 52)
Universidad de Chile (Chl) 1 (Olarra 47)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 85,000. **Ref:** Soto (Ven)
Guadalajara: Michel - Reynoso, Magallon, Esparza, Ponce, Baez, Mejia, Arellano, Medina (Fabian 70), Bautista, Bravo.
Universidad: M Pinto - Rodriguez, Victorino, Olarra, J Rojas, Seymour (N Pinto 87), Iturra, Contreras (A Rojas 80), Montillo, Puch, Olivera (Rivarola 66).

July 28
Internacional (Bra) 1 (Giuliano 67)
Sao Paulo (Bra) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 48,166. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)
Internacional: Renan - Nei, Bolivar, Indio, Kleber, Sandro, Guinazu, Andrezinho (Giuliano 65), D'Alessandro, Taison (Rafael Sobis 84), Alecsandro.
Sao Paulo: Rogerio Ceni - Alex Silva, Miranda, Richarlyson (Cleber Santana 70), Jean, Rodrigo Souto, Hernanes, Marlos (Fernandinho 82), Junior Cesar, Dagoberto (Ricardo Oliveira 74), Fernandao.

2nd legs

Aug 3
Universidad de Chile 0
Guadalajara 2 (Baez 22, Magallon 55)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Pezzotta (Arg)
Guadalajara 3-1 on agg
Universidad: M Pinto - Olarra (Vargas 75), J Rojas (A Rojas 68), Victorino, Rodriguez, Seymour, Montillo, Iturra, Contreras (Rivarola 46), Puch, Olivera.
Guadalajara: Michel - De Luna, Reynoso, Magallon, Ponce, Araujo, Mejia, Baez, Fabian (Escalante 86), Bautista (Davila 82), Bravo (Vazquez 90).

Aug 5
Sao Paulo 2 (Alex Silva 30, Ricardo Oliveira 53)
Internacional 1 (Alecsandro 51)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 57,113. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)
Agg 2-2. Internacional on away goals
Sao Paulo: Rogerio Ceni - Jean, Alex Silva, Miranda, Junior Cesar, Rodrigo Souto (Marcelinho Paraiba 87), Cleber Santana (Marlos 73), Hernanes, Fernandao, Dagoberto (Fernandinho 81), Ricardo Oliveira.
Internacional: Renan - Nei, Bolivar, Indio, Kleber, Sandro, Guinazu, Tinga, D'Alessandro (Giuliano 78), Taison (Wilson Mathias 89), Alecsandro.
Sent off: Tinga 79min

Final

1st leg

Aug 11
Guadalajara 1 (Bautista 45)
Internacional 2 (Giuliano 72, Bolivar 76)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)
Guadalajara: Michel - De Luna, Magallon, Reynoso, Ponce - Baez (Davila 89), Mejia, Fabian (Escalante 79), Bautista - Bravo, Arellano (Araujo 69).
Internacional: Renan - Nei, Bolivar, Indio, Kleber - Sandro, Guinazu, Giuliano, D'Alessandro, Taison (Wilson Mathias 89) - Alecsandro (Everton 34; Rafael Sobis 71).

2nd leg

Aug 18
Internacional 3 (Rafael Sobis 61, Leandro Damiao 75, Giuliano 88)
Guadalajara 2 (Fabian 42, Bravo 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 53,124. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
Internacional 5-3 on agg
Internacional: Renan - Nei, Bolivar, Indio, Kleber - Sandro, Guinazu, Tinga (Wilson Mathias 83), D'Alessandro, Taison (Giuliano 64) - Rafael Sobis (Leandro Damiao 72).
Guadalajara: Michel - De Luna, Magallon, Reynoso, Ponce (Escalante 78) - Araujo, Baez (Vazquez 80), Fabian - Bautista - Arellano, Bravo.
Sent off: Arellano 85min.

SUDAMERICANA CUP

1st round

1st legs - Aug 3-24; 2nd legs - Aug 10-Sep 2
Deportivo Quito (Ecu) v San Martin (Per) (game G) 3-2, 1-2 (agg 4-4; San Martin on away goals)

Remaining games:
Universitario (Bol) v Colo Colo (Chl) (game A)
Guarani (Par) v River Plate (Uru) (B)
Cesar Vallejo (Per) v Barcelona (Ecu) (C)
Atletico Huila (Col) v Trujillanos (Ven) (D)
Universidad de Chile (Chl) v Oriente Petrolero (Bol) (E)
Defensor Sporting (Uru) v Olimpia (Par) (F)
Deportivo Lara (Ven) v Indep Santa Fe (Col) (H)

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Sacked...Cardozo

PARAGUAY

Libertad takes honours in derby

Olimpia lost the Asuncion derby when they were beaten 2-0 at home by Libertad. It was their first match since the dismissal of coach Jose Cardozo and it continued a run of three successive defeats.

After six games, Cerro Porteno remain the only unbeaten team in the clausura, but they are three points behind Libertad. Title holders Guarani are third, with Olimpia back in eighth.

PERU

San Martin top table

A 2-1 victory at home to Sport Boys secured the first stage of the championship for San Martin with two games still to play. Leon and Alianza Lima were nine points behind.

URUGUAY

Refs go on strike

The opening weekend of the new season was postponed following a referees dispute over pay with the Uruguayan Football Association.

"We're not the film's bad guys, we haven't just made our demands before the start of the championship, we did so months ago," said an official from the referee's union.

Good start...Toronto's Martin Saric (right)

2nd round

1st legs - Aug 4-Sep 16; 2nd legs - Aug 11-Sep 23
Goias (Bra) v Gremio (Bra)
1-1, 2-0 (agg 3-1)
Gremio Prudente (Bra) v Atletico Mineiro (Bra)
0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
Santos (Bra) v Avai (Bra)
1-3, 1-0 (agg 2-3)
Vitoria (Bra) v Palmeiras (Bra)
2-0, 0-3 (agg 2-3)

Remaining games:
Game D winners v San Jose (Bol)
Independiente (Arg) v Argentinos Juniors (Arg)
Game C winners v Penarol (Uru)
Game H winners v Caracas (Ven)
Game E winners v Tolima (Col)
Game B winners v San Felipe (Chl)
Velez Sarsfield (Arg) v Banfield (Arg)
San Martin v Emelec (Ecu)
Game A winners v Cerro Porteno (Par)
Game F winners v Huancayo (Per)
Newell's Old Boys (Arg) v Estudiantes (Arg)

Bye to last 16:
LDU Quito (Ecu; holders)

ARGENTINA

Apertura

Friday, August 6
Arsenal 1 (Obolo 54)
Lanus 2 (Aguirre 26, Pizarro 74)

Saturday, August 7
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Vargas 40)
Huracan 2 (Martinez 68, Montiglio 70)

Newell's Old Boys 0
Estudiantes 1 (Veron pen 71)

Quilmes 1 (Morales 89)
Colon 1 (Fuertes 43)

Racing Club 1 (Aveldano 62)
All Boys 0

Sunday, August 8
Banfield 2 (Erviti pen 27, Garcia 35)
Olimpo 1 (Delorte 1)

Gimnasia La Plata 0
San Lorenzo 0

Godoy Cruz 1 (Russo 14)
Boca Juniors 1 (Viatri 21)

River Plate 1 (Funes Mori 90+1)
Tigre 0

Velez Sarsfield 1 (Silva 35)
Independiente 0

Friday, August 13
Colon 0
Banfield 1 (Garcia 79)

Saturday, August 14
Boca Juniors 1 (Viatri 10)
Racing Club 2 (Yacob 34, Caceres 50)

Lanus 1 (Salcedo 14)
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Sperdutti 40)

San Lorenzo 2 (Tula 19, Rivero 78)
Godoy Cruz 2 (Ramirez 42, 46)

Tigre 1 (Stracqualursi 71)
Arsenal 2 (Leguizamon 11, 16)

Sunday, August 15
All Boys 1 (Sanchez 79)
Velez Sarsfield 2 (Moralez 37, Martinez 45)

Estudiantes 2 (Brana 82, Lopez pen 90+3)
Quilmes 0

Huracan 0
River Plate 1 (Affranchino 12)

Olimpo 1 (Mosset 23)
Gimnasia La Plata 0

Monday, August 16
Independiente 1 (Mancuello 17)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Prosperi 16)

Friday, August 20
Banfield 0
Estudiantes 0

Newell's Old Boys 2 (Schiavi 45, Rodriguez 88)
Tigre 0

Saturday, August 21
Godoy Cruz 1 (Rojas 41)
Olimpo 0

Quilmes 1 (Morales 8)
Lanus 1 (Salcedo 14)

Racing Club 1 (Luguercio 56)
San Lorenzo 2 (Pereyra 20, Balsas 86)

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Somoza pen 71, Silva 76)
Argentinos Juniors 0

Sunday, August 22
All Boys 2 (Matos pen 30, Dominguez 40)
Boca Juniors 0

Arsenal 2 (Obolo 17, Leguizamon pen 63)
Huracan 0

Gimnasia La Plata 0
Colon 0

River Plate 3 (Funes Mori 9, 19, Ferrari 25)
Independiente 2 (Silvera 18, Carrizo og 90)

ARGENTINA – APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Velez	3	3	0	0	5	1	9
River Plate	3	3	0	0	5	2	9
Estudiantes	3	2	1	0	3	0	7
Banfield	3	2	1	0	3	1	7
Arsenal	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Racing Club	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
Godoy Cruz	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
Lanus	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
San Lorenzo	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
Newell's	3	1	1	1	3	2	4
All Boys	3	1	0	2	3	3	3
Olimpo	3	1	0	2	2	3	3
Huracan	3	1	0	2	2	4	3
Colon	3	0	2	1	1	2	2
Gimnasia LP	3	0	2	1	0	1	2
Quilmes	3	0	2	1	2	4	2
Independiente	3	0	1	2	3	5	1
Argentinos	3	0	1	2	2	5	1
Boca Juniors	3	0	1	2	2	5	1
Tigre	3	0	0	3	1	5	0

19-round tournament (19x1); no relegation after apertura

LEADING GOALSCORERS
3 Gabriel Funes Mori (River Plate)
3 Luciano Leguizamon (Arsenal)

BOLIVIA

Clausura

July 31: Universitario 3 La Paz 1; Aurora 1 Guabira 0.
Aug 1: San Jose 2 Blooming 0; Bolivar 2 The Strongest 2; Mamore 0 Wilstermann 0; Oriente 3 Potosi 1.
Aug 7: Guabira 1 Bolivar 0.
Aug 8: La Paz 0 Oriente 0; The Strongest 3 Mamore 0; Wilstermann 1 San Jose 3; Blooming 2 Universitario 1.
Aug 14: Bolivar 2 Potosi 0; Universitario 1 Wilstermann 1; Blooming 2 La Paz 0.
Aug 15: San Jose 3 The Strongest 2; Mamore 0 Guabira 0; Aurora 2 Oriente 0.
Aug 21: Potosi 4 Mamore 0.
Aug 22: La Paz 1 Aurora 1; The Strongest 3 Universitario 0; Guabira 3 San Jose 1; Wilstermann 0 Blooming 1.

BOLIVIA – CLAUSURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
The Strongest	5	3	1	1	14	7	10
San Jose	5	3	1	1	11	8	10
Blooming	5	3	1	1	6	4	10
Guabira	5	2	2	1	5	3	8
Bolivar	4	2	1	1	5	3	7
Aurora	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
Potosi	4	2	0	2	7	6	6
Oriente	4	1	2	1	4	4	5
Universitario	5	1	2	2	7	9	5
Mamore	5	0	3	2	1	8	3
Wilstermann	5	0	2	3	2	6	2
La Paz	5	0	2	3	3	8	2

22-round tournament (11x2); team with worst average points over two most recent seasons will be relegated; 2nd worst will enter rel/prom play-off

BRAZIL

July 31: Sao Paulo 2 Ceara 1; Goianiense 1 Guarani 1; Fluminense 3 Paranaense 1.
Aug 1: Internacional 0 Gremio 0; Avai 4 Goias 1; Vitoria 1 Botafogo 3; Palmeiras 1 Corinthians 1; Gremio Prudente 1 Santos 2; Mineiro 0 Cruzeiro 1; Flamengo 0 Vasco da Gama 0.
Aug 7: Guarani 4 Avai 1; Botafogo 3 Mineiro 0.
Aug 8: Corinthians 1 Flamengo 0; Goias 1 Palmeiras 1; Ceara 0 Goianiense 0; Gremio 1 Fluminense 2; Paranaense 1 Sao Paulo 1; Vasco da Gama 1 Vitoria 0; Cruzeiro 0 Gremio Prudente 0.
Aug 14: Goianiense 0 Botafogo 2; Palmeiras 2 Paranaense 0; Flamengo 1 Ceara 0; Mineiro 3 Guarani 1.
Aug 15: Sao Paulo 2 Cruzeiro 2; Gremio Prudente 1 Vasco da Gama 2; Fluminense 3 Internacional 0; Avai 3 Corinthians 2; Vitoria 4 Santos 2; Gremio 2 Goias 0.
Aug 21: Goias 1 Gremio Prudente 2; Botafogo 1 Avai 0; Ceara 2 Gremio 1.
Aug 22: Santos 2 Mineiro 0; Guarani 0 Palmeiras 0; Paranaense 1 Flamengo 0; Internacional 1 Goianiense 1; Cruzeiro 0 Vitoria 1; Corinthians 3 Sao Paulo 0; Vasco da Gama 2 Fluminense 2.

BRAZIL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fluminense	15	10	3	2	25	11	33
Corinthians	15	9	4	2	27	16	31
Botafogo	15	6	6	3	26	17	24
Ceara	15	6	6	3	12	8	24
Avai	15	6	4	5	25	23	22
Santos	14	6	3	5	23	20	21
Internacional	14	6	3	5	20	19	21
Cruzeiro	15	5	6	4	16	14	21
Vasco	15	5	6	4	16	17	21
Flamengo	15	5	5	5	13	12	20
Vitoria	15	5	5	5	19	19	20
Palmeiras	15	4	8	3	16	14	20
Guarani	15	4	7	4	17	20	19
Paranaense	15	5	2	8	18	26	17
Sao Paulo	15	4	5	6	18	20	17
G Prudente*	15	4	6	5	17	19	15
Gremio	15	3	6	6	18	21	15
Mineiro	15	4	1	10	17	28	13
Goias	15	3	4	8	14	24	13
Goianiense	15	2	4	9	12	21	10

38-round season (19x2); bottom 4 will be relegated
**3pts deducted for fielding an ineligible player*

CHILE

July 30: Univ Catolica 4 O'Higgins 1; San Luis 1 Huachipato 4; Univ Concepcion 1 Palestino 0.
Aug 1: Nublense 1 Audax Italiano 5; La Serena 2 Morning 0; Wanderers 2 Cobreloa 1; Colo Colo 5 San Felipe 2.
Aug 6: Audax Italiano 5 Espanola 2.
Aug 7: Cobreloa 2 Colo Colo 1; O'Higgins 0 San Luis 0; Univ Chile 1 La Serena 2.
Aug 8: Palestino 0 Univ Catolica 1; Morning 1 Cobresal 1; Huachipato 3 Wanderers 2; San Felipe 0 Univ Concepcion 0.
Aug 13: Audax Italiano 1 San Felipe 0.
Aug 14: Wanderers 0 Colo Colo 1; Espanola 3 Palestino 2; Univ Concepcion 2 O'Higgins 1.
Aug 15: Morning 0 Univ Catolica 2; San Luis 0 La Serena 1; Nublense 1 Huachipato 1; Cobresal 0 Cobreloa 1; Univ Chile 5 Everton 1.
Aug 20: O'Higgins 0 Cobresal 1.
Aug 21: Huachipato 1 Univ Chile 2; Univ Catolica 4 San Luis 1.
Aug 22: San Felipe 1 Morning 0; Palestino 2 Nublense 0; La Serena 4 Wanderers 0; Cobreloa 1 Audax Italiano 1; Everton 1 Univ Concepcion 1; Colo Colo 1 Espanola 0.

CHILE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo	21	15	2	4	46	19	47
Univ Catolica	21	14	4	3	42	20	46
Univ Chile	20	13	3	4	53	28	42
Audax Italiano	21	10	4	7	45	42	34
Huachipato	21	8	6	7	30	27	30
San Felipe	21	8	5	8	25	28	29
Espanola	20	7	7	6	29	30	28
Cobresal	20	8	4	8	29	31	28
O'Higgins	21	7	6	8	27	24	27
La Serena	21	8	3	10	28	45	27
U Concepcion	21	6	8	7	24	26	26
Cobreloa	21	6	7	8	27	26	25
Wanderers	21	6	6	9	31	32	24
Palestino	21	6	5	10	21	24	23
Everton	19	6	5	8	22	27	23
Nublense	20	4	8	8	29	43	20
Morning	21	4	6	11	16	30	18
San Luis	21	2	7	12	21	43	13

34-round season (17x2); bottom 2 will be relegated; 3rd & 4th bottom will enter rel/prom play-offs

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CANADA

Newbies beat Mexicans

Toronto made an impact on their first venture into the CONCACAF Champions League, beating Mexico's Cruz Azul 2-1 with goals from Martin Saric and Mista.

MEXICO

Santos' first defeat

Santos Laguna dropped their first points of the new season as they lost 1-0 at Tigres.

Reigning Apertura champions Toluca picked up their first win 1-0 at Atlas thanks to Antonio Naelson's last-minute strike.

Islander...Scott Jones (left)

PUERTO RICO

Galaxy put out

Puerto Rico Islanders reached the group stage of the CONCACAF Champions League after knocking out Los Angeles Galaxy in the preliminary round. The Islanders reached the semi-finals of the inaugural league format in 2009.

USA

Onalfo shown the door

DC United sacked coach Curt Onalfo after a 3-0 defeat against Real Salt Lake made it six games without a win.

Six and out...Onalfo

COLOMBIA

Clausura

Regular season

July 31: Dep Cali 3 Nacional 1; Indep Santa Fe 3 Cortulua 0.
Aug 1: Quindio 3 Millonarios 2; Junior 1 Tolima 1; Chico 2 Envigado 1; Huila 2 Cartagena 1; Indep Medellin 1 America 0; Cucuta 2 La Equidad 0.
Aug 6: La Equidad 4 Once Caldas 2.
Aug 7: Dep Cali 0 Indep Medellin 0; Nacional 1 Quindio 0.
Aug 8: Tolima 1 Cucuta 0; Pereira 2 Chico 2; Envigado 0 Huila 1; Cartagena 2 Indep Santa Fe 2; Cortulua 1 America 2; Millonarios 1 Junior 1.
Aug 13: Indep Santa Fe 1 Envigado 0.
Aug 14: Cucuta 2 Millonarios 1; Huila 3 Pereira 2.
Aug 15: Indep Medellin 2 Cortulua 1; Chico 0 La Equidad 0; Once Caldas 1 Tolima 3; America 0 Cartagena 2.
Aug 16: Quindio 2 Dep Cali 0.
Aug 21: Quindio 1 Indep Medellin 1; Dep Cali 2 Junior 2; Nacional 1 Cucuta 0.
Aug 22: Tolima 3 Chico 1; Pereira 0 Indep Santa Fe 1; La Equidad 4 Huila 1; Envigado 1 America 3; Cartagena 1 Cortulua 0; Millonarios 1 Once Caldas 2.

COLOMBIA – CLAUSURA REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ind Santa Fe	6	5	1	0	11	3	16
Tolima	6	4	2	0	11	4	14
Cucuta	6	4	0	2	8	4	12
Huila	6	3	2	1	9	9	11
La Equidad	6	3	1	2	9	6	10
Quindio	6	3	1	2	7	6	10
Chico	6	2	3	1	6	6	9
Once Caldas	5	3	0	2	9	10	9
Cartagena	6	2	2	2	7	6	8
Ind Medellin	5	2	2	1	4	4	8
America	6	2	1	3	7	8	7
Junior	5	1	3	1	6	6	6
Nacional	3	2	0	1	3	3	6
Dep Cali	6	1	3	2	6	7	6
Millonarios	5	1	1	3	6	8	4
Pereira	5	0	1	4	6	10	1
Cortulua	6	0	1	5	3	10	1
Envigado	6	0	0	6	3	11	0

18-round regular season – top 8 will enter championship play-offs; team with worst average points over three most recent seasons will be relegated; 2nd worst will enter rel/prom play-off

ECUADOR

2nd stage

July 28: Cuenca 1 LDU 1.
July 29: Independiente 3 Macara 1.
July 30: Manta 2 Univ Catolica 2.
July 31: Espoli 2 Dep Quito 3; Barcelona 2 Olmedo 0.
Aug 1: El Nacional 0 Emelec 0.
Aug 7: Espoli 1 Manta 0; Dep Quito 0 Macara 0.
Aug 8: Univ Catolica 0 El Nacional 1; Olmedo 0 Cuenca 0; Emelec 0 Barcelona 0.
Aug 10: LDU 2 Independiente 0.
Aug 13: Cuenca 1 Emelec 1; El Nacional 0 Espoli 0.
Aug 14: Independiente 1 Olmedo 1; Manta 1 Dep Quito 2.
Aug 15: Macara 2 LDU 4; Barcelona 5 Univ Catolica 1.
Aug 18: Univ Catolica 2 Cuenca 3; Emelec 2 Independiente 1; Olmedo 0 Macara 1; Manta 1 El Nacional 0; Dep Quito 1 LDU 1.
Aug 21: Macara 1 Emelec 4; Barcelona 1 Manta 2.
Aug 22: Cuenca 2 Espoli 1; LDU 1 Olmedo 0; El Nacional 1 Dep Quito 3; Independiente 1 Univ Catolica 3.

ECUADOR – 2ND STAGE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LDU	8	6	2	0	18	9	20
Cuenca	8	5	3	0	14	8	18
Emelec	8	3	5	0	10	4	14
Barcelona	7	4	1	2	13	7	13
Dep Quito	8	3	3	2	11	11	12
Manta	8	3	2	3	11	10	11
Univ Catolica	8	2	2	4	11	14	8
Macara	8	2	1	5	11	16	7
Espoli	7	1	3	3	7	9	6
El Nacional	8	1	3	4	6	12	6
Olmedo	8	1	3	4	5	11	6
Independiente	8	1	2	5	9	15	5

22-round stage (11x2) – 2nd stage winner then meets 1st stage winner to decide overall champion; the 2 teams with fewest points from both stages combined will be relegated

PARAGUAY

Clausura

July 30: Olimpia 1 Rubio Nu 4.
July 31: Tacuary 2 3 de Febrero 0.
Aug 1: Colombia 1 Libertad 0; Luqueno 0 Guarani 3; Sol de America 1 Nacional 0; Trinidense 1 Cerro Porteno 5.
Aug 7: 3 de Febrero 0 Colombia 3; Nacional 4 Trinidense 1; Libertad 2 Rubio Nu 1; Guarani 1 Tacuary 0.
Aug 8: Cerro Porteno 1 Luqueno 1; Sol de America 1 Olimpia 0.
Aug 14: Colombia 1 Guarani 1; Trinidense 1 Sol de America 3; Luqueno 0 Nacional 1.
Aug 15: Rubio Nu 1 3 de Febrero 1; Tacuary 0 Cerro Porteno 1; Olimpia 0 Libertad 2.
Aug 21: 3 de Febrero 1 Sol de America 1; Rubio Nu 2 Luqueno 2; Colombia 1 Tacuary 3; Libertad 7 Trinidense 0.
Aug 22: Guarani 0 Nacional 0; Olimpia 2 Cerro Porteno 2.

PARAGUAY – CLAUSURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Libertad	6	5	0	1	16	3	15
Cerro Porteno	6	3	3	0	11	4	12
Guarani	6	3	2	1	7	3	11
Sol America	6	3	1	2	7	6	10
Rubio Nu	6	2	3	1	9	6	9
Nacional	6	2	2	2	5	4	8
Olimpia	6	2	1	3	8	9	7
Tacuary	6	2	1	3	5	6	7
Colombia	6	2	1	3	6	8	7
3 de Febrero	6	0	4	2	3	8	4
Trinidense	6	1	1	4	5	20	4
Luqueno	6	0	3	3	4	9	3

22-round tournament (11x2); team with worst average points over three most recent seasons will be relegated; 2nd worst will enter rel/prom play-off

PERU

1st stage

July 31: Leon 3 Melgar 1; Sporting Cristal 1 Jose Galvez 2; Cesar Vallejo 2 Sport Boys 1; Alianza Atletico 1 Universitario 0.
Aug 1: Cienciano 2 Inti Gas 0; Huancayo 1 San Martin 2; Total Chalaco 0 CNI 1; Alianza Lima 1 Juan Aurich 0.
Aug 6: Cesar Vallejo 1 Melgar 0.
Aug 7: Inti Gas 2 Alianza Lima 1; Alianza Atletico 0 San Martin 3; Jose Galvez 1 Total Chalaco 1.
Aug 8: Cienciano 4 CNI 0; Sport Boys 3 Huancayo 1; Sporting Cristal 1 Juan Aurich 1; Universitario 1 Leon 1.
Aug 13: Melgar 0 Universitario 4.
Aug 14: Leon 3 Alianza Atletico 1; CNI 1 Jose Galvez 1; Alianza Lima 2 Cienciano 1.
Aug 15: Total Chalaco 1 Sporting Cristal 0; Huancayo 1 Cesar Vallejo 0; San Martin 2 Sport Boys 1; Juan Aurich 1 Inti Gas 0.
Aug 21: Universitario 1 San Martin 0; Melgar 3 Sport Boys 3; Total Chalaco 3 Cienciano 0; Jose Galvez 0 Juan Aurich 1; CNI 3 Inti Gas 0; Huancayo 2 Alianza Atletico 1; Cesar Vallejo 1 Leon 2; Sporting Cristal 1 Alianza Lima 0.

PERU – 1ST STAGE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
San Martin	29	19	5	5	61	29	62
Leon	29	16	5	8	50	29	53
Alianza Lima	29	16	5	8	47	30	53
Cesar Vallejo	29	15	5	9	46	29	50
Universitario*	29	15	5	9	41	21	48
Juan Aurich	29	13	8	8	41	30	47
S Cristal	29	12	7	10	40	39	43
Huancayo	29	11	5	13	42	43	38
Inti Gas	29	11	2	16	34	43	35
Melgar	29	8	9	12	37	49	33
Total Chalaco	29	8	8	13	30	40	32
CNI**	29	10	6	13	38	50	32
Cienciano***	28	9	5	14	32	44	30
Sport Boys	29	8	6	15	33	53	30
Jose Galvez	28	5	10	13	16	37	25
Al Atletico	29	5	9	15	23	45	24

30-round stage (15x2). In the 2nd stage, the division splits into two groups – the teams finishing the 1st stage in odd-numbered positions go into one, the teams in even-numbered positions go into the other
**2pts deducted for failing to pay a former coach*
***4pts deducted for failing to pay two players*
****2pts deducted for failing to pay a former player*

URUGUAY

Apertura

Aug 21: Fenix 1 Tacuarembo 1; Central Espanol 0 Bella Vista 1.
Aug 22: Cerro 0 Danubio 0; El Tanque Sisley 1 Racing 0; Liverpool 3 Rampla 1.

URUGUAY – APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Bella Vista	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
El Tanque S	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Fenix	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Tacuarembo	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Cerro	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Danubio	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Defensor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M Misiones	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wanderers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nacional	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Penarol	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
River Plate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C Espanol	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Racing	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Rampla	1	0	0	1	1	3	0

15-round tournament (15x1); no relegation after apertura

VENEZUELA

Apertura

Aug 8: Carabobo 3 Caroni 1; Lara 0 Zulia 1; Tachira 1 Yaracuyanos 0; Venezuela 1 El Vigia 1; Caracas 3 Monagas 0; Anzoategui 2 Petare* 2.
Aug 10: Zamora 1 Aragua 2.
Aug 14: Yaracuyanos 1 Trujillanos 1.
Aug 15: Zulia 4 El Vigia 1; Estudiantes 1 Carabobo 1; Caroni 0 Caracas 1; Monagas 2 Venezuela 2; Petare 2 Mineros 1; Tachira 3 Anzoategui 1; Esppor 3 Zamora 0.
Aug 18: Trujillanos 0 Estudiantes 1.
Aug 21: Caracas 1 Estudiantes 0.
Aug 22: Carabobo 1 Yaracuyanos 1; Venezuela 1 Caroni 0; Monagas 3 Zulia 2; El Vigia 0 Aragua 0; Lara 1 Esppor 3; Trujillanos 1 Tachira 3; Mineros 3 Anzoategui 1.

VENEZUELA – APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tachira	3	3	0	0	7	2	9
Caracas	3	3	0	0	5	0	9
Esppor	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Zulia	3	2	0	1	7	4	6
Carabobo	3	1	2	0	5	3	5
Venezuela	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
Petare*	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Aragua	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Estudiantes	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Monagas	3	1	1	1	5	7	4
Mineros	2	1	0	1	4	3	3
Yaracuyanos	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
El Vigia	3	0	2	1	2	5	2
Trujillanos	3	0	1	2	2	5	1
Anzoategui	3	0	1	2	4	8	1
Lara	2	0	0	2	1	4	0
Caroni	3	0	0	3	1	5	0
Zamora	2	0	0	2	1	5	0

17-round tournament (17x1); no relegation after apertura
**Formerly known as Deportivo Italia*

CONCACAF

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary round

1st legs - July 27-29; 2nd legs - August 3-5
Brujas (CR) v Joe Public (T&T)
2-2, 2-4 (agg 4-6)
CD FAS (ElS) v Xelaju (Gtm)
1-1, 2-0 (agg 3-1)
LA Galaxy (USA) v Puerto Rico Islanders (PR)
1-4, 2-1 (agg 3-5)
San Francisco (Pan) v Cruz Azul (Mex)
2-3, 0-6 (agg 2-9)
San Juan Jabloteh (T&T) v Santos Laguna (Mex)
0-1, 0-5 (agg 0-6)
Seattle Sounders (USA) v Isidro Metapan (ElS)
1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1)
Tauro (Pan) v Marathon (Hnd)
0-3, 2-1 (agg 2-4)
Toronto (Can) v Motagua (Hnd)
1-0, 2-2 (agg 3-2)

Group stage

Group A

Aug 17: Toronto 2 Cruz Azul 1.
Aug 18: Real Salt Lake (USA) 2 Arabe Unido (Pan) 1.

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Salt Lake	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Toronto	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Arabe Unido	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Cruz Azul	1	0	0	1	1	2	0

Aug 17	Toronto v Cruz Azul 2-1
Aug 18	Real Salt Lake v Arabe Unido... 2-1
Aug 24	Arabe Unido v Toronto
Aug 25	Cruz Azul v Real Salt Lake

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ALGERIA

Semi-finals beckon

JS Kabylie's 1-0 win against Group B rivals Al Ahly leaves them five points clear of their Egyptian rivals and needing to win only one more game to reach the CAF Champions League semi-finals. Mohamed Khoutir-Ziti scored the only goal in what coach Alain Geiger described "a huge victory".

ES Setif, last year's North African Cup of Champions winners, confirmed their position as the best club in North Africa by beating 2009 North African Cup Winners CS Sfaxien 1-0 in the UNAF Super Cup with a goal from Nabil Hemani.

Close...JSK's Billel Naili (left)

BOTSWANA

Chiefs' new leader

Rahman Gumbo, who coached Township Rollers to the league title last season, has joined Mochudi Centre Chiefs.

NIGERIA

Treble hopes denied

Enyimba's hopes of a domestic treble were shattered by a 3-2 penalty shoot-out defeat by Kaduna United in the Nigerian Cup Final after drawing 3-3. Enyimba had already won the league title and pre-season Super Four tournament.

AUSTRALIA

A-League underway

Sydney drew 3-3 with Melbourne Victory – the side they beat on penalties in last season's Grand Final – in their A-League curtain-raiser.

Elsewhere, a crowd of 11,000 turned out for Melbourne Heart's first A-League game, but they were beaten 1-0 by Central Coast Mariners at AAMI Park.

Sep 15	Arabe Unido v Cruz Azul
Sep 15	Real Salt Lake v Toronto
Sep 21	Cruz Azul v Toronto
Sep 22	Arabe Unido v Real Salt Lake
Sep 28	Cruz Azul v Arabe Unido
Sep 28	Toronto v Real Salt Lake
Oct 19	Real Salt Lake v Cruz Azul
Oct 19	Toronto v Arabe Unido

Group B

Aug 18: Columbus Crew (USA) 1 Municipal (Gtm) 0; Joe Public 2 Santos Laguna 5.

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos	1	1	0	0	5	2	3
Columbus	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Municipal	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Joe Public	1	0	0	1	2	5	0

Aug 18	Columbus Crew v Municipal 1-0
Aug 18	Joe Public v Santos Laguna..... 2-5
Aug 24	Santos Laguna v Columbus
Aug 26	Municipal v Joe Public
Sep 14	Columbus Crew v Joe Public
Sep 14	Municipal v Santos Laguna
Sep 21	Columbus v Santos Laguna
Sep 23	Joe Public v Municipal
Sep 29	Municipal v Columbus Crew
Sep 29	Santos Laguna v Joe Public
Oct 19	Santos Laguna v Municipal
Oct 21	Joe Public v Columbus Crew

Group C

Aug 17: Monterrey (Mex) 1 Saprissa (CR) 0.
Aug 19: Marathon 2 Seattle Sounders 1.

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Marathon	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Monterrey	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Seattle	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Saprissa	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Aug 17	Monterrey v Saprissa..... 1-0
Aug 19	Marathon v Seattle Sounders .. 2-1
Aug 25	Seattle Sounders v Monterrey
Aug 26	Saprissa v Marathon
Sep 14	Monterrey v Marathon
Sep 14	Saprissa v Seattle Sounders
Sep 22	Marathon v Saprissa
Sep 22	Monterrey v Seattle Sounders
Sep 28	Saprissa v Monterrey
Sep 29	Seattle Sounders v Marathon
Oct 19	Seattle Sounders v Saprissa
Oct 20	Marathon v Monterrey

Group D

Aug 17: Puerto Rico Islanders 1 Olimpia (Hnd) 1.
Aug 18: CD FAS 0 Toluca (Mex) 0.

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olimpia	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Puerto Rico	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
CD FAS	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Toluca	1	0	1	0	0	0	1

Aug 17	Puerto Rico v Olimpia 1-1
Aug 18	CD FAS v Toluca 0-0
Aug 25	Puerto Rico v CD FAS
Aug 26	Toluca v Olimpia
Sep 15	Toluca v Puerto Rico
Sep 16	Olimpia v CD FAS
Sep 22	CD FAS v Puerto Rico
Sep 23	Olimpia v Toluca
Sep 29	Puerto Rico v Toluca
Sep 30	CD FAS v Olimpia
Oct 20	Olimpia v Puerto Rico
Oct 20	Toluca v CD FAS

Top two in each group qualify for quarter-finals

MEXICO

Apertura

Regular season

July 30: Necaxa 0 Tigres 2.
July 31: Cruz Azul 2 Atlante 0; Queretaro 2 Atlas 1; Monterrey 3 Tecos 2; Santos 4 Pumas 0.
Aug 1: Toluca 1 Pachuca 1; Puebla 2 San Luis 1; America 3 Jaguares 0.
Aug 7: Jaguares 1 Toluca 1; Tigres 1 America 1; Pachuca 0 Santos 3; Atlas 0 Necaxa 1; San Luis 0 Guadalajara 1; Atlante 1 Monterrey 2.
Aug 8: Pumas 2 Cruz Azul 0; Morelia 6 Queretaro 0; Tecos 1 Puebla 3.
Aug 13: Necaxa 1 Queretaro 1.
Aug 14: Cruz Azul 4 Pachuca 1; Monterrey 5 Pumas 2; Santos 1 Jaguares 0; San Luis 1 Morelia 0.
Aug 15: Puebla 1 Atlante 1; Toluca 1 Tigres 1; America 1 Atlas 1.
Aug 20: Tecos 3 San Luis 2.
Aug 21: Jaguares 2 Cruz Azul 3; Pachuca 2 Monterrey 2; Tigres 1 Santos 0; Atlas 0 Toluca 1; Atlante 2 Guadalajara 1.
Aug 22: Morelia 1 Necaxa 0; Pumas 4 Puebla 1; Queretaro 0 America 1.

MEXICO – APERTURA REGULAR – GROUP 1	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos	5	4	0	1	12	2	12
Monterrey	5	3	2	0	13	8	11
Tigres	5	2	2	1	5	3	8
Necaxa	5	1	2	2	3	5	5
Guadalajara	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Tecos	4	1	0	3	6	11	3

MEXICO – APERTURA REGULAR – GROUP 2	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
America	5	2	2	1	6	5	8
Toluca	5	1	3	1	5	5	6
Pachuca	5	1	2	2	7	10	5
San Luis	5	1	1	3	5	7	4
Atlante	5	1	1	3	5	10	4
Atlas	5	0	1	4	2	6	1

MEXICO – APERTURA REGULAR – GROUP 3	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruz Azul	5	4	0	1	12	5	12
Morelia	4	3	0	1	8	1	9
Pumas	5	3	0	2	10	11	9
Puebla	5	2	2	1	7	7	8
Queretaro	5	2	1	2	4	9	7
Jaguares	5	0	2	3	4	9	2

17-round regular season (17x1) – top 2 in each group and the 2 other teams with most points, regardless of group, will enter championship play-offs. No relegation after apertura

UNITED STATES

Regular season

July 31: Philadelphia 1 New England 1; Colorado 1 Dallas 1; Houston 2 New York 2; Kansas City 1 Toronto 0; Salt Lake 3 DC United 0; San Jose 0 Seattle 1; Chivas 3 Columbus 1.
Aug 1: Los Angeles 2 Chicago 3.
Aug 5: Philadelphia 1 Columbus 2.
Aug 7: Toronto 2 Chivas 1; New England 1 DC United 0; Kansas City 1 Salt Lake 1; Colorado 1 San Jose 0.
Aug 8: Dallas 3 Philadelphia 1; Chicago 0 New York 0; Seattle 2 Houston 0.
Aug 11: New York 1 Toronto 0; Philadelphia 1 Salt Lake 1.
Aug 14: Philadelphia 1 Colorado 1; New York 0 Los Angeles 1; DC United 1 Dallas 3; New England 1 Houston 0; Salt Lake 2 Columbus 0; San Jose 1 Kansas City 0; Chivas 0 Seattle 0.
Aug 18: Chicago 2 New England 1.
Aug 21: Toronto 1 New York 4; San Jose 1 Los Angeles 0; Columbus 3 Colorado 1; Dallas 1 Chivas 0; Kansas City 4 New England 1; Houston 4 Chicago 3.
Aug 22: DC United 2 Philadelphia 0.

USA – REGULAR – EASTERN CONFERENCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Columbus	21	12	4	5	31	20	40
New York	21	10	4	7	25	23	34
Toronto	20	7	5	8	22	25	26
Chicago	18	6	6	6	26	26	24
Kansas City	20	6	5	9	19	23	23
New England	20	6	3	11	20	33	21
Philadelphia	20	4	5	11	23	36	17
DC United	21	4	3	14	15	35	15

USA – REGULAR – WESTERN CONFERENCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Los Angeles	21	13	4	4	32	14	43
Salt Lake	21	11	6	4	36	16	39
Dallas	20	9	9	2	28	17	36
San Jose	19	8	5	6	22	20	29
Seattle	21	8	5	8	23	25	29
Colorado	20	7	7	6	22	21	28
Houston	21	6	5	10	27	33	23
Chivas	20	5	4	11	22	26	19

30-round regular season (15x2) – top 2 in each conference and the 4 other teams with most points, regardless of conference, will enter championship play-offs. No relegation from this league

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

July 31: Esperance (Tun) 1 Dynamos (Zim) 0.
Aug 1: TP Mazembe (DRC) 2 ES Setif (Alg) 2.
Aug 15: Dynamos 1 ES Setif 0; TP Mazembe 2 Esperance 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
TP Mazembe	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
Esperance	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
Dynamos	3	1	0	2	1	3	3
ES Setif	3	0	1	2	2	4	1

July 16	ES Setif v Esperance..... 0-1
July 18	Dynamos v TP Mazembe..... 0-2
July 31	Esperance v Dynamos.....1-0
Aug 1	TP Mazembe v ES Setif.....2-2
Aug 15	Dynamos v ES Setif.....1-0
Aug 15	TP Mazembe v Esperance.....2-1
Aug 27	ES Setif v Dynamos
Aug 28	Esperance v TP Mazembe
Sep 10-12	TP Mazembe v Dynamos
Sep 10-12	Esperance v ES Setif
Sep 17-19	ES Setif v TP Mazembe
Sep 17-19	Dynamos v Esperance

Group B

July 31: JS Kabylie (Alg) 1 Heartland (Nga) 0.
Aug 1: Al Ahly (Egy) 2 Ismaili (Egy) 1.
Aug 15: JS Kabylie 1 Al Ahly 0; Ismaili 1 Heartland 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
JS Kabylie	3	3	0	0	3	0	9
Al Ahly	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Ismaili	3	1	0	2	2	3	3
Heartland	3	0	1	2	1	3	1

July 18	Ismaili v JS Kabylie.....0-1
July 18	Heartland v Al Ahly.....1-1
July 31	JS Kabylie v Heartland.....1-0
Aug 1	Al Ahly v Ismaili.....2-1
Aug 15	JS Kabylie v Al Ahly.....1-0
Aug 15	Ismaili v Heartland.....1-0
Aug 29	Heartland v Ismaili
Aug 29	Al Ahly v JS Kabylie
Sep 10-12	JS Kabylie v Ismaili
Sep 10-12	Al Ahly v Heartland
Sep 17-19	Heartland v JS Kabylie
Sep 17-19	Ismaili v Al Ahly

Top two in both groups qualify for semi-finals

CONFEDERATION CUP

Intermediate round

(losing teams from the Champions League 2nd round entered at this stage)
1st legs - July 16-18; 2nd legs - July 31-Aug 1

Al Hilal (Sud) v Caps United (Zim)
5-0, 3-1 (agg 8-1)
Al Ittihad (Lby) v Primeiro Agosto (Ang)
2-0, 1-2 (agg 3-2)
Al Merreikh (Sud) v AS Fan (Ngr)
2-2, 1-2 (agg 3-4)
Djoliba (Mli) v CR Belouizdad (Alg)
0-0, 1-1 (agg 1-1; Djoliba on away goals)
Gaborone United (Bot) v Haras Hedood (Egy)
1-0, 1-8 (agg 2-8)
Petro Atletico (Ang) v CS Sfaxien (Tun)
0-0, 1-3 (agg 1-3)
SuperSport United (SAf) v FUS Rabat (Mor)
2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2; FUS Rabat on away goals)
Zanaco (Zam) v Enyimba (Nga)
4-0, 0-2 (agg 4-2)

Group stage

Group A

Aug 14: AS Fan 0 Djoliba 0.
Aug 15: Al Ittihad 1 Al Hilal 2.

CONFEDERATION CUP – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
AS Fan	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Djoliba	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Al Ittihad	1	0	0	1	1	2	0

Group B

Aug 14: FUS Rabat 1 Zanaco 0.
Aug 15: Haras Hedood 0 CS Sfaxien 0.

CONFEDERATION CUP – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FUS Rabat	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
CS Sfaxien	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Haras Hedood	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Zanaco	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Top two in both groups qualify for semi-finals

Remaining matchdays:
August 28; September 10-12; September 17-19; October 1-3; October 15-17

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INDIA

Professional approach

I-League clubs have been told they must turn professional or they will be banned from local and regional competitions. The Asian Football Confederation wants to restrict the Champions League to pro teams from next year.

"Clubs who don't meet the criteria will not be allowed to play in the 2012 edition of the I-League," said All India Football Federation general secretary Alberto Colaco.

INDONESIA

Fitting finale

Sriwijaya beat Arema Malang 2-1 in the Indonesian Cup Final to deny the league champions the double. It was a fitting end for coach Rahmad Darmawan, who is being replaced by Ivan Kolev of Bulgaria.

National first...Tokyo

JAPAN

Tokyo's title

J.League Cup winners Tokyo became the first Japanese side to win the Suruga Bank Championship, beating 2009 Copa Sudamericana winners LDU Quito 4-3 on penalties.

MALAYSIA

Champs defend crown

Selangor retained their Super League title with a 2-0 victory over Terengganu 2-0 at the Shah Alam Stadium.

UZBEKISTAN

Ristic strike wins Cup

Bunyodkor claimed their first silverware of the new season, beating Shurtan Guzar 1-0 in the Uzbekistan Cup Final, with the only goal of the game coming from Macedonian striker Stevico Ristic.

EGYPT

EGYPT

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Entag Harby	3	3	0	0	6	3	9
Ismaili	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
Shorta	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
ML Makasa	3	1	1	1	8	5	4
Zamalek	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Ahly	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Masry	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
ENPPI	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Gouna	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Wadi Degla	3	1	0	2	8	10	3
Haras Hedood	2	0	2	0	4	4	2
Ittihad	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Smouha	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Jaish	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
Petrojet	2	0	0	2	0	3	0
Mokawloon	2	0	0	2	3	7	0

Standings on August 23

30-round season (15x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

MAURITANIA

MAURITANIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cansado	22	13	7	2	30	13	46
Tevragh Zeina	22	14	3	5	48	14	45
Concorde	22	12	4	6	39	22	40
Ksar	22	9	8	5	23	14	35
Nouadhibou	22	9	6	7	21	17	33
Kedia	22	9	6	7	27	30	33
Nasr	22	9	5	8	32	27	32
Mauritel	22	9	4	9	26	27	31
El Ahmedi	22	5	8	9	14	22	23
ACAS Teyarett	22	5	7	10	19	32	22
Dar El Barka (R)	22	4	2	16	18	46	14
Dar Naim (R)	22	1	6	15	10	43	9

TUNISIA

TUNISIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Etoile Sahel	3	2	1	0	3	0	7
Stade Tunisien	3	2	1	0	4	2	7
CS Sfaxien	3	2	1	0	2	0	7
Esperance	3	2	1	0	2	0	7
Zarzis	3	1	1	1	4	2	4
Ham-Sousse	3	1	1	1	2	1	4
Club Africain	3	1	0	2	3	3	3
Olympique	3	0	3	0	0	0	3
Bizertin	3	1	0	2	2	3	3
Gabes	3	1	0	2	2	4	3
Kairouanaise	3	1	0	2	2	4	3
Gafsa	3	1	0	2	2	5	3
Marsa	3	0	2	1	1	2	2
Hammam-Lif	3	0	1	2	1	4	1

Standings on August 23

26-round season (13x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals draw

Al Hilal (Sau) v Al Gharafa (Qat)
Jeonbuk Motors (SKo) v Al Shabab (Sau)
Seongnam (SKo) v Suwon Bluewings (SKo)
Zob-Ahan (Irn) v Pohang Steelers (SKo)

1st legs - Sep 15; 2nd legs - Sep 22

AFC CUP

Quarter-finals draw

Al Ittihad (Syr) v Kazma (Kuw)
Al Karamah (Syr) v Muangthong United (Tha)
Al Riffa (Bhn) v Da Nang (Vie)
Thai Port (Tha) v Al Qadsia (Kuw)

1st legs - Sep 14/15; 2nd legs - Sep 21/22

AUSTRALIA

Regular season

Aug 5: Melbourne Heart 0 Central Coast 1.
Aug 6: Adelaide 0 Newcastle 0; Perth 3 North Queensland 3.
Aug 7: Sydney 3 Melbourne Victory 3.
Aug 8: Gold Coast 0 Brisbane 0.
Aug 13: Wellington 3 Gold Coast 3; Newcastle 1 Melbourne Heart 1.
Aug 14: North Queensland 2 Sydney 1; Melbourne Victory 0 Perth 2.
Aug 15: Central Coast 1 Adelaide 1.
Aug 20: Adelaide 3 Melbourne Heart 2.
Aug 21: Perth 1 Newcastle 0; Brisbane 1 Sydney 0.
Aug 22: Wellington 2 Central Coast 0; Melbourne Victory 2 North Queensland 2.

AUSTRALIA – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Perth	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
N Queensland	3	1	2	0	7	6	5
Adelaide	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
Wellington	2	1	1	0	5	3	4
Brisbane	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Central Coast	3	1	1	1	2	3	4
Gold Coast	2	0	2	0	3	3	2
Newcastle	3	0	2	1	1	2	2
Melbourne V	3	0	2	1	5	7	2
Sydney	3	0	1	2	4	6	1
Melbourne H	3	0	1	2	3	5	1

30-round regular season (10x3) – top 6 will enter championship play-offs; no relegation from this league

BANGLADESH

BANGLADESH – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Abahani D	24	22	1	1	63	8	67
Moham'dan D	24	19	5	0	63	12	62
Sheikh Russell	24	15	5	4	49	19	50
Feni	24	7	9	8	16	22	30
Arambagh	24	6	9	9	30	43	27
Muktijoddha	24	8	3	13	26	46	27
Brothers Union	24	5	11	8	20	26	26
Rahmatganj	24	7	5	12	28	36	26
Moham'dan C	24	5	11	8	21	33	26
Farashganj	24	4	11	9	20	25	23
Abahani C	24	5	6	13	24	43	21
Shukhtara (R)	24	4	8	12	12	35	20
Biyanibazar (R)	24	3	8	13	19	43	17

JAPAN

July 27: Shimizu 3 Cerezo 2; Kashima 2 Albirex 2; Vegalta 1 Sanfrecce 1.
July 28: Vissel 1 Gamba 3; Kyoto 0 Urawa 4; Nagoya 2 Shonan 1; Tokyo 1 Jubilo 1; Omiya 1 Yokohama 1; Montedio 0 Kawasaki 0.
July 31: Urawa 0 Omiya 1; Jubilo 0 Cerezo 3; Albirex 2 Tokyo 1; Yokohama 0 Nagoya 2; Kashima 3 Vissel 0.
Aug 1: Sanfrecce 3 Kyoto 0; Gamba 1 Montedio 0; Shonan 3 Shimizu 6; Kawasaki 3 Vegalta 2.
Aug 7: Kyoto 0 Albirex 2; Omiya 3 Shonan 0; Shimizu 2 Kashima 1; Sanfrecce 0 Gamba 2; Montedio 1 Jubilo 0; Vegalta 0 Yokohama 1.
Aug 8: Vissel 1 Urawa 0; Cerezo 0 Kawasaki 0; Tokyo 0 Nagoya 1.
Aug 13: Montedio 1 Albirex 0.
Aug 14: Vissel 0 Shonan 0; Shimizu 1 Yokohama 2; Vegalta 1 Gamba 3; Kashima 1 Tokyo 1; Nagoya 3 Urawa 1.
Aug 15: Omiya 0 Jubilo 0; Kyoto 0 Cerezo 1; Kawasaki 2 Sanfrecce 0.
Aug 17: Albirex 4 Shimizu 1; Gamba 1 Kashima 1; Urawa 1 Vegalta 1; Yokohama 0 Montedio 1.
Aug 18: Kawasaki 4 Nagoya 0; Shonan 2 Kyoto 2; Jubilo 3 Vissel 2; Cerezo 4 Tokyo 1; Sanfrecce 1 Omiya 2.
Aug 21: Kashima 0 Cerezo 1; Tokyo 0 Sanfrecce 2; Shonan 1 Urawa 4; Albirex 2 Kawasaki 1; Kyoto 1 Yokohama 2.
Aug 22: Montedio 0 Vissel 0; Omiya 0 Vegalta 3; Jubilo 2 Shimizu 1; Nagoya 3 Gamba 1.

JAPAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nagoya	20	13	2	5	33	24	41
Cerezo	20	10	6	4	33	18	36
Kashima	20	10	6	4	33	20	36
Shimizu	20	10	6	4	40	29	36
Kawasaki	20	10	5	5	34	26	35
Albirex	20	9	7	4	30	22	34
Gamba	20	8	7	5	36	28	31
Yokohama	20	9	4	7	25	22	31
Sanfrecce	20	8	5	7	23	24	29
Montedio	20	8	4	8	17	23	28
Urawa	20	8	3	9	30	25	27
Jubilo	20	6	6	8	22	28	24
Omiya	20	5	6	9	17	23	21
Tokyo	20	4	8	8	21	25	20
Vissel	20	5	5	10	21	29	20
Vegalta	20	4	6	10	24	32	18
Shonan	20	3	5	12	21	41	14
Kyoto	20	2	5	13	18	39	11

34-round season (17x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

SOUTH KOREA

Regular season

July 31: Ulsan 2 Daejeon 0; Gyeongnam 3 Incheon 2; Chunnam 2 Pohang 2; Seongnam 1 Daegu 3; Jeonbuk 2 Busan 1; Suwon 2 Gwangju 0; Seoul 2 Jeju 0.
Aug 7: Jeju 4 Gwangju 0; Daegu 1 Daejeon 3; Gangwon 2 Ulsan 2; Incheon 2 Suwon 3.
Aug 8: Busan 1 Gyeongnam 2; Pohang 2 Seongnam 0; Jeonbuk 1 Seoul 0.
Aug 14: Chunnam 4 Jeju 2; Gwangju 1 Busan 1; Incheon 1 Seongnam 4; Daejeon 1 Gangwon 2; Ulsan 2 Suwon 3; Gyeongnam 3 Jeonbuk 2.
Aug 15: Daegu 0 Pohang 2.
Aug 21: Gyeongnam 1 Chunnam 1; Jeju 1 Busan 0; Seoul 2 Gangwon 1; Suwon 2 Daegu 1.
Aug 22: Seongnam 2 Ulsan 0; Jeonbuk 3 Daejeon 2; Pohang 3 Incheon 2.

SOUTH KOREA – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gyeongnam	17	10	5	2	27	16	35
Jeju	17	10	4	3	32	17	34
Jeonbuk	17	10	4	3	37	23	34
Seongnam	17	10	3	4	33	16	33
Seoul	16	11	0	5	29	13	33
Ulsan	17	8	4	5	23	22	28
Busan	17	6	5	6	24	20	23
Suwon	17	7	2	8	26	29	23
Pohang	18	5	6	7	27	33	21
Incheon	17	6	1	10	27	33	19
Chunnam	17	4	6	7	27	31	18
Gwangju	16	3	5	8	11	24	14
Gangwon	17	3	4	10	20	36	13
Daejeon	17	3	4	10	15	31	13
Daegu	17	3	3	11	19	33	12

28-round regular season (14x2) – top 6 will enter championship play-offs

OCEANIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Draw

Group A

Amical (Van)
Hekari United (PNG)
Koloale (Sol)
Lautoka (Fij)

Group B

Auckland City (NZ)
Magenta (NC)
Tefana (Tah)
Waitakere United (NZ)

Group winners qualify for Final

Matchdays:
2010 – October 23; November 13; December 4.
2011 – February 5; February 26; March 19

FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

September 3
Euro 2012 qualifiers
September 3/4/5
African Nations Cup qualifiers
September 7
Euro 2012 qualifiers
September 14/15
UEFA Champions League group games start
September 15
AFC Champions League quarter-finals, 1st leg
September 16
Europa League group games start
September 22
AFC Champions League quarter-finals, 2nd leg
September 28/29
UEFA Champions League group games, second round of matches
September 30
Europa League group games, second round of matches

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Famous Last Words

Who said what and why

"I'm not a packet of washing powder. To be at peace with myself, I'll do whatever it takes to leave here"

Eternal Marseille bad boy Hatem Ben Arfa goes on strike to force his way out of the club

"These people are clowns. I am dying with laughter"
Nicolas Anelka doesn't think much of the French FA who handed him an 18-match ban

"For a Brazilian it's hard to work with Felix Magath. After the way he treated me I think I could become a general in the army"
Happy to no longer be on the Schalke parade ground, new Genoa right-back Rafinha reveals his demob delight

"I would rather play with 10 men than wait for a player who is late for the bus"
Jose Mourinho lays down the law to his new charges at Real Madrid

No sub...Demichelis

"He is an excellent player but he just wants to play in the centre of the defence because then he does not have to do too much running"
Franz Beckenbauer on Martin Demichelis' refusal to be a sub for Bayern's opening game

"It's not the Yorkshire Ripper I'm signing, he's a footballer"
Tottenham Hotspur boss Harry Redknapp welcomes ex-Arsenal defender William Gallas to White Hart Lane

"You have just won the World Cup, right?"
Uninformed US talk-show host on Fox 5 takes New York's summer signing Thierry Henry to a parallel universe far from South Africa

"We've received information that some players have been tortured. However I can't personally confirm the reports"
Mohamed Bin Hammam, the president of the Asian confederation, gives a degree of credence to rumours that North Korea's World Cup squad came in for state-sanctioned physical abuse as punishment for their three losses in South Africa

"I might be in a bit of a Skoda garage rather than a Mercedes garage but I'm telling you...some old bangers don't half polish up great"
Ian Holloway, manager of Premier League new boys Blackpool, following their 6-0 defeat away to Arsenal

"They come in with £10,000 watches on their wrists and walk around as if they have played 200 Premier League games"
Aston Villa's Stephen Ireland doesn't think much of the young players at his former club, Manchester City

World beater...Henry

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